



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

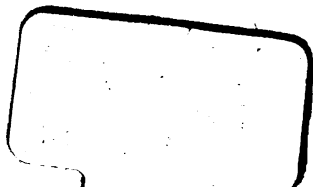
We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

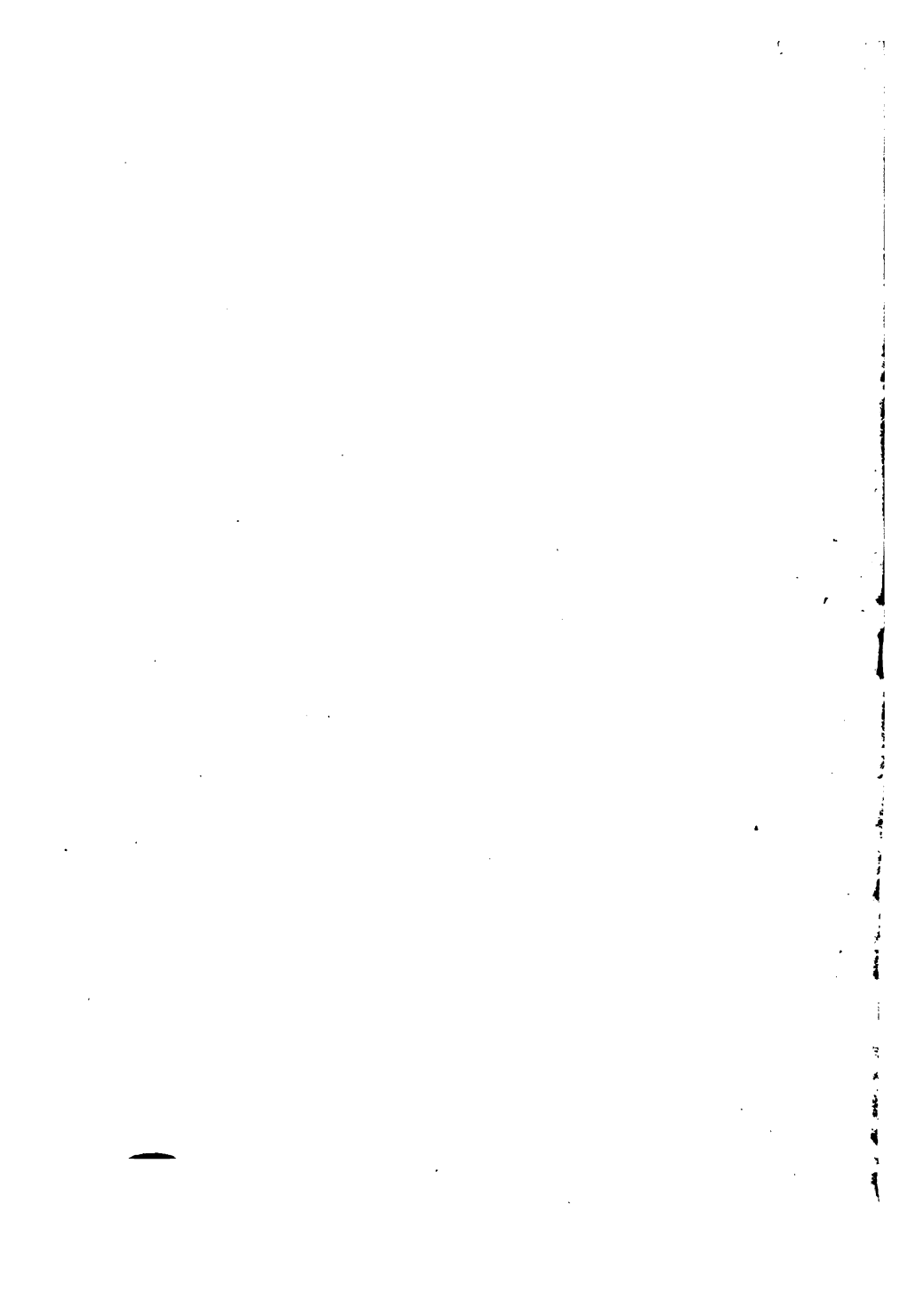
About Google Book Search

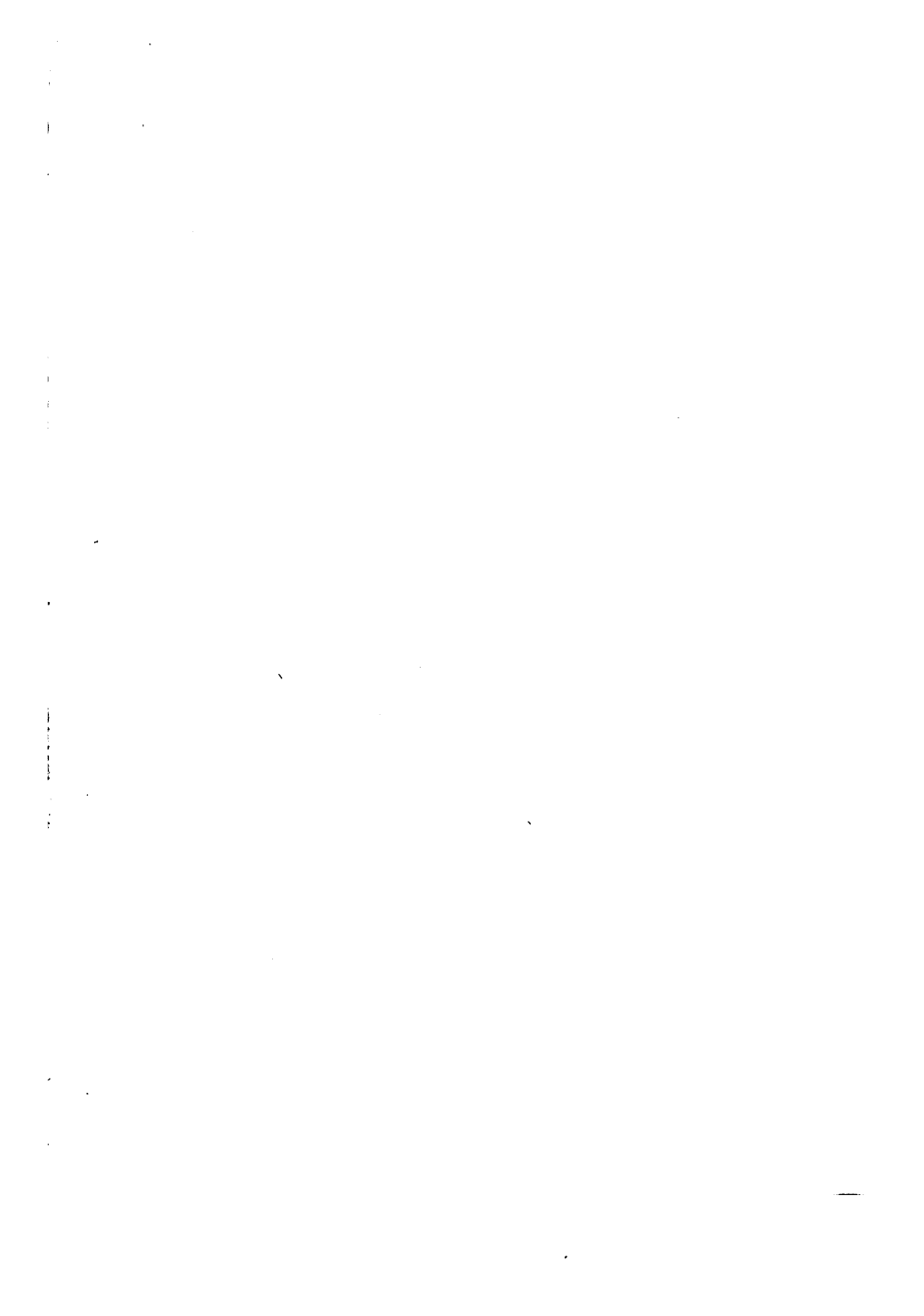
Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>

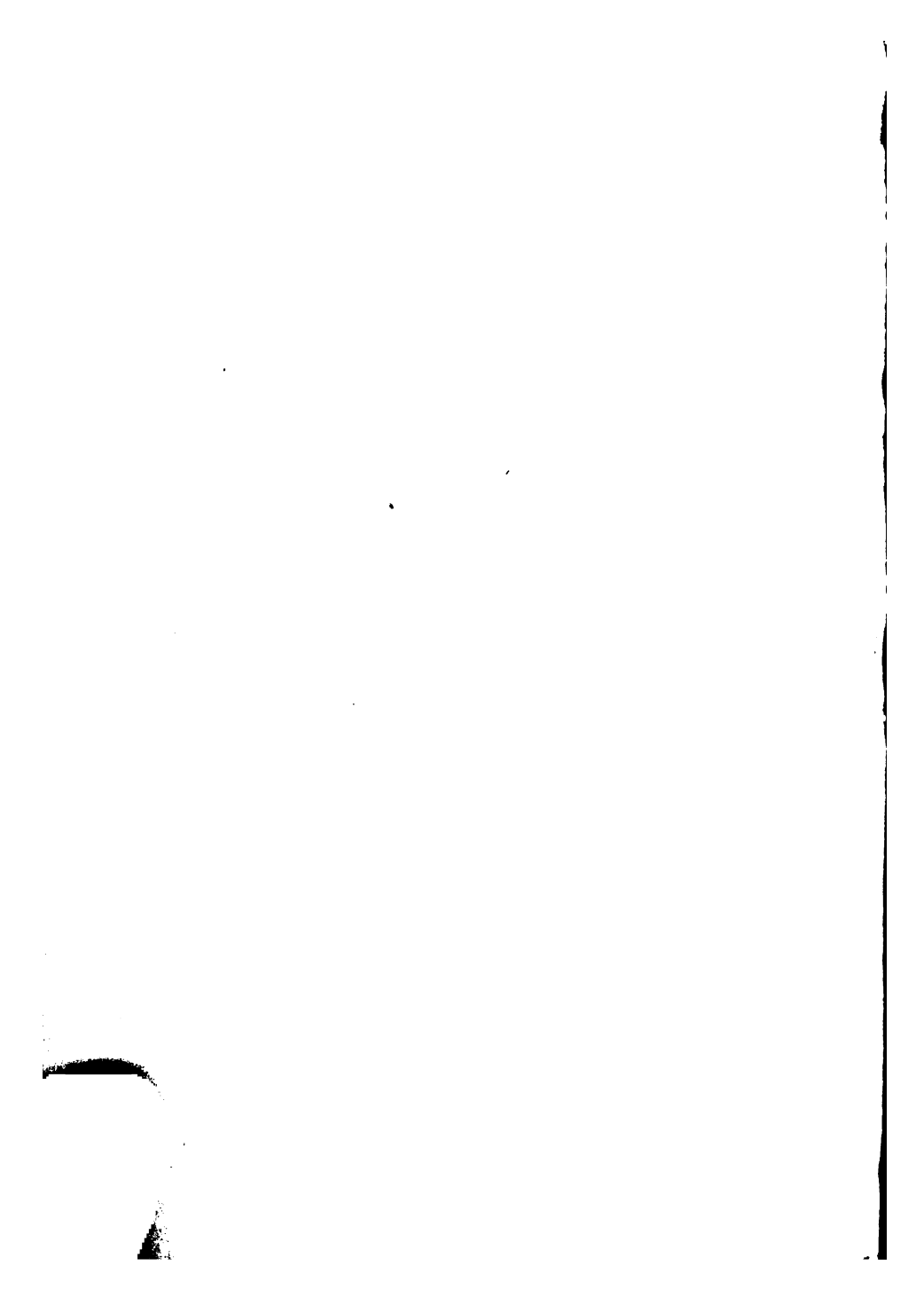
Porting



Hersey
NEE -









GESTURES IN IVORY

By

HAROLD HERSEY



NEW YORK
BRITTON PUBLISHING COMPANY

1919

mk

NEW YORK
KOBLE
1919

913167

**COPYRIGHT, 1919, BY
HAROLD HERSEY**

550 copies printed from
type and numbered and
the type distributed.

60

*With sincere affection this
book is dedicated to
WYNDHAM MARTYN,
WALTER ADOLPHE ROBERTS,
RICHARDSON WRIGHT,
the Three Musketeers who have
battled ever for all that is sin-
cere and beautiful in poetry.*

Thanks are due the editors of the following magazines for permission to reprint many of these poems: *Ainslee's*, *House and Garden Magazine*, *Smart Set*, *Parisienne*, *Saucy Stories*, *The Thrill Book*, etc. etc.

CONTENTS

GESTURES IN IVORY

	PAGE
THE PAINTED LADY	1
AN HOUR OF GRACE	2
THE DREAMS OF MEN	4
THE BUDDHA	6
ART	7
FOR ALWAYS AND FOREVER	8
THE LESS HEROIC AND DESIRED THING	9
THEIR SONS—1918	10
PATCHIN PLACE—AFTERWARDS	11
FLOWERLIGHT	12
THE LUTANIST	13
LITTLE WIFE	14
THE GREAT PROCESSION—1918	15
MY LOVELY	16
REWARD	17
A FRAGMENT	18
PATCHIN PLACE NOCTURNES	19
THE KING	21
SONG	22
WHEN THE HEART AWAKENS	23
THE HERO	24
THE SIMPLE FLESH	25
THE PRAYER OF A CERTAIN JUGGLER OF WORDS	26
LITTLE GIRL	27
THE AFTER DAWN	28
THE BATTLE	29
MARJANEH	30
THE DUSK	31

CAPTAIN GEORGES GUYNEMER	32
THE HALF-BAKED ONES	34
HINDSIGHT	44
AMY MUNSON	45
GESTURES IN IVORY	54
A SONG OF PATCHIN PLACE	61

UNIFORMS

UNIFORMS—I, II	63
SINGING IN CAMP	67
ON LEAVE	68
BLEEDING HEART	69
THE MACHINE STOPS—NOVEMBER, 1918	70
COMPENSATION	73
LINES	74
STRAY LINES	75
IMPRESSIONS	76
WOMEN	77
SOLDIER, SOLDIER	78
THE GIFT OF SILENCE	79
PICTURES IN GRAY	80
A LAMENT	82
DUST	83
FURLONGHS	84
THOUGHTS OF A UNIFORM	86
SONG	87
RIVERS OF LAUGHTER	88
A LETTER	90
THE PRIZEFIGHT	91
A LETTER WRITTEN FROM A FORT	93
THE GREAT LESSON	97
IMPRESSIONS	98
TO THE PARLOR POETS OF AMERICA	99
AT PARTING	100
MAJOR RAOUL LUFBERY	101
THE UNSPEAKABLE	103
GUARDHOUSE	104
GASSED	105

CONTENTS

iii

COMMANDS	106
DISCHARGED	107
RETURNING UNIFORMS	108
MEMORIES	110

THE WIDE ROAD

FOREWORD	111
BEFORE THE HOUR OF NOON	112
THE HEIGHTS OF LIFE	115
LIGHT AND DARKNESS	118
THE RIPENING FRUIT	120
KNOWLEDGE AND BELIEF	122
THROUGH THE DESERT	123
THE AWAKENING	125
THE PSALM OF DEATH	127

THE CUP OF LIFE

FOUR PAGES FROM THE DIARY OF A MURDERER'S WIFE	128
THE CHRISTENING	131
THE ROLLING STONES	133
THE MORALISTS	134
THE MARRIAGE	135
THE CHURCH	138

SILHOUETTES OF THE COUNTRY

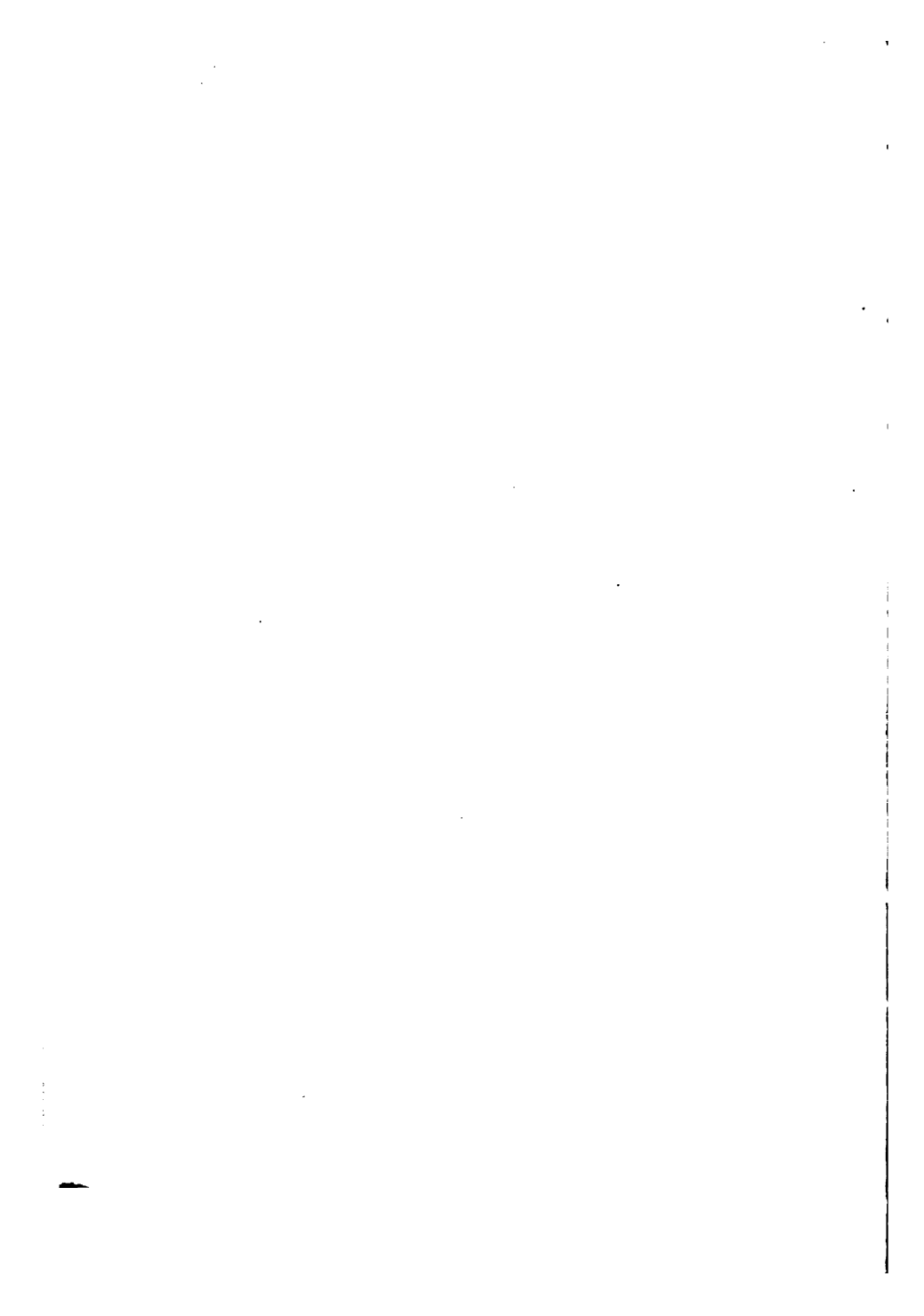
SILENCE	142
AT THE CROSSROADS—I, II	144
ROMANCE	145
THE CHILDREN	146
AT DUSK	147
THE SECRET STORY	148
"IN THE SPRING A YOUNG MAN'S FANCY"	151

LOOSE LEAVES

THE GREAT SYMPHONY	154
To ———	156

OUR HELEN	157
SEX	158
THE PUBLIC LIBRARY	159
TO MY LOVE WITH SOME VERSES	160
L'ENVOI	161
A WOMAN'S DRESS	162
FLORENCE, ITALY, 1500	163
DEAD HANDS	165
SONG	167
LINES AT RANDOM	168

GESTURES IN IVORY



THE PAINTED LADY

(FOR A. E. RENNER)

The painted lady smiled:
"You are a child . . . mere child."
She tapped him with her fan:
"Go off and be a man."

He kissed her slim hand then:
"You'll hear of me again."
They did . . . some lived to tell
How he went forth and fell;

Torn body on a fence,
Death as a recompense,
One arm flung o'er his head
As children do in bed.

The painted lady smiled:
"He may have been a child."
She waved her gaudy fan:
"But died just like a man."

Within that painted house
Where bellied men carouse,
The painted lady's face
Was lighted as with grace.

AN HOUR OF GRACE

*And these are the things we gather, each in his speeding
hour . . .*

*To some a hint of light that fills a withered face,
To others a touch of beauty haunting a broken flower,
To all a night of silence after an hour of grace.*

Along the earth's far edges life burns away the scars
And ere the dawn is grey, through flaming rings of space,
We plunge down deathward through a hurricane of stars,
Remembering her hands in that little hour of grace.

The tendrils of her hair then whisper at our ears,
And her fingers like budding flowers in their sleeves of lace,
Have left their light touch on us, and all the hungry years
Are singing of that hour, that little hour of grace.

And every misered trinket that we have gathered up
Is rusted or broken or lost each in a separate place,
The wine of the years a dream within a shattered cup
Spilt in a moment of madness, a little hour of grace.

And with each morning and the setting sun our calls
Fill all the world with echoes that after echoes race,
And when no answer comes in all those white, white halls
We sink in a heap of wonder with our little hour of grace.

Life's hidden lamps are lowered, the stunted wicks are
trimmed

While pale against the sky the shadows interlace
With the purple voice of her eyes . . . the deathless songs
she hymned

Are only of that hour, that little hour of grace.

AN HOUR OF GRACE

And now each day is like a wasted song about
The dead lips of an ill-tuned instrument; the face
Of night is veiled with death, each star has fluttered out
As though in mourning for our little hour of grace.

*And these are the things we gather, each in his speeding
hour . . .*

*To some a hint of light that fills a withered face,
To others a touch of beauty haunting a broken flower,
To all a night of silence after an hour of grace.*

THE DREAMS OF MEN

(FOR EDWARD KIRBY)

The great, great banners go before,
To all the far winds thrown
And though men march beneath them to the war,
They die alone.

Steel and clash of steel and voice of hell,
Bare fields and broken hearts,
They go into the dust of night . . . Ah! wish them well,
They play their parts.

And where are all our toys, our visionings,
That clung to us since we were boys of ten,
Are they forgotten with the other things?
Alas, the dreams, the dreams of men.

Pile up the dead and keep the powder fresh,
Bugle and fife and drum,
The red-hot cannons roar for human flesh. . . .
They come, they come.

Beneath the haunted silence of the sky
The red battalions war,
And those who care enough to win or die
Come back no more.

And all the deeds of saints . . . what are they worth
Their lofty visions and the mighty pen,
The splendid sadness and the roaring mirth?
Alas, the dreams, the dreams of men.

THE DREAMS OF MEN

Across the wasted bosom of the earth
The frenzied columns streak
And the hosts who love them and who gave them birth
They dare not speak.

And where are all the songs that have been sung?
Can things once beautiful be so again?
The viols of the singers are unstrung. . . .
Alas, the dreams, the dreams of men.

THE BUDDHA

(FOR THEODORE DREISER)

The Buddha sits there with its fleshless eyes
Like some grim stoic scorning every ill,
His belly long since having had its fill
And bulging foolishly from oversize;
The carven garments loop against the thighs.
Around the battered image lingers still
The deep impression of a single will
As patient as its crafty art was wise.

Some great lone dreamer in an ancient land
Carved this old idol with despotic grace
And made the thing appear to understand
The mysteries that haunt the human race,
Concealing with a flourish of the hand
Man's ignorance behind a silent face.

ART

(FOR JOHN COWPER POWYS)

There was a poet and a mighty king . . .
The first a shrunked fool, of shapeless face,
The second, proud of an immortal place,
Whose glory was a golden, stately thing.

The poet was the butt, the withered sting,
Yet clung unto a burning sense of grace;
He sung the glories of that splendid race
As only those who suffer dare to sing.

The songs that filled a century with light
The king scorned as a warrior scorns the pen
And yet of all that empire's dazzling might,
The dusty marching of those ancient men,
Naught lives but what the poet's visioned sight
Creates in music for us once again.

FOR ALWAYS AND FOREVER

(FOR EDITH DORCHESTER)

"For always and forever," the lady said, "O King of Kings,"
And yet to dust
His mighty empire crumbled in a broken heap of things,
As all things must.

"For always and forever," sang the priests of Babylon
Who lived too well,
A song upon the lips of many lovers in Illion
Before it fell.

"For always and forever," Antony said unto one
And kissed her hands;
Their glory was a moment, their dreams of dust . . . now does
the sun
Beat on the sands.

"For always and forever," said the Roman emperors,
"Glory is ours!"
But where are all the golden hosts that went upon their wars;
Their shining towers?

"For always and forever," cried they on the great crusades,
"For God we fight!"
To-day . . . a memory of shattered fields and broken blades,
An aching night.

THE LESS HEROIC AND DESIRED THING—1917

(FOR WYNDHAM MARTYN)

One hears much shouting and the roar of hands
That roll in rising echoes down the street;
The great applause; the tread of marching feet . . .
A nation's tribute to despairing lands.
The citizen with vain, uplifted hands
Who listens, grimly, as the proud drums beat,
May wonder well where all these visions meet
In unison to make such great demands.

The soldiers pass and leave him standing there
When all the crowd has melted, wondering
How he may hold his heart against despair.
High on the night his mounting dreams take wing
But Fate bids him stay home, fulfilling there
The less heroic and desired thing.

THEIR SONS—1918

(FOR ELAINE STERNE)

The dust is gathering on their toys, for when
The nursery is closed with none to play
What is there for the wiser heads to say?
The hobby horse will never rock again,
Nor Robin Hood lurk in his ivied glen
And leaden soldiers dash into the fray. . . .
They've laid the tiny treasures all away
As unbecfitting those who fought like men.

The chubby hands that pulled a sister's hair
Or swung the wooden swords around her head,
Have written of the battles "over there"
But left out much that cowards might have said—
All day the house is silent yet the air
Seems strangely filled with voices of the dead.

PATCHIN PLACE—AFTERWARDS

(FOR FREDERICK BOOTH)

Scraps of song wrought out of pain
Whose every echo lingers;
Days that cannot live again,
The touch of slender fingers.

The burning madness of their lips,
A bare room stripped of song,
A darkness that around them slips . . .
They loved and were not strong.

FLOWERLIGHT

I should have torn my music from you,
Struck every silent string
And swept you gladly from your feet
So that I might sing.

But a fortress taken is not always won . . .
Or a kingdom in an hour . . .
Come! let us go singing out of the desert
Delirious with power.

THE LUTANIST

(FOR MARY CAROLYN DAVIES)

I whisper softly in the vainest heart,
I scorn the fury of the strong;
Like wine I make the crumbling senses start
And cloak my coming in a song.

Along the borders of the wind I run,
Over the hills at break of day;
Between the shadows and the evening sun
I lift my lute and softly play.

I am the winter in the heart of spring,
I race around the earth at will;
I stir the world with endless murmuring
Of ancient music never still.

I whisper through the darkness of the night,
And in the twilight of the years
To every wasted heart my music's flight
Brings silence and the end of tears.

LITTLE WIFE

Little wife who waits so patiently
Sewing in the easy chair,
What is it you are thinking of,
Sitting so quiet there?

You do not read the papers now,
The blood-red horrors fill them all;
You have the living memory
Around you like a wall.

One evening not so long ago
They must have touched your own small door
And told you that there is no need
Of waiting any more.

THE GREAT PROCESSION—1918

(FOR NINA WILCOX PUTNAM)

They've swept the last red heirlooms in the dust
Where all the shadows of forgotten faces
Within the aching darkness leave no traces.
And every breast is but a grave, a crust
Where some sweet voice died out within a gust
Of murder . . . through those silent, starlit spaces
The long procession treads the unknown places
To where Fate stands with kindly hands outthrust.

And for the things that life might dare deny
To those whose duty still remained undone
They have no thought; they do not wonder why
The battles they have fought are yet unwon. . . .
Against the dusty outlines of the sky
They go into the silence, one by one.

MY LOVELY

You might waste worlds to fill a wish of mine,
And live on faith in me past all despair,
Then as you drank life's final glass of wine
Laugh at the broken beauty visioned there.

Like trinkets lost in some mad throw of dice
If I but asked you would give each hour
And cast yourself a flaming sacrifice
Beneath my footsteps like a shattered flower.

You would tear every cord of living flesh
With bleeding hands that I might plunder there
New harmonies to keep my vision fresh;
And spend your strength and give me strength to spare.

You crush your hopes into the very dust,
Or scorn the splendour of an empire's might
And are content upon a piece of crust
To buy new oil to feed this trembling light.

How many like yourself have stirred the art
That slumbered in a weakling . . . played the game
Unto the finish with despairing heart
Whose courage only fanned a dying flame!

REWARD

Think of all the things that you have almost had
Through all the years that you have bluffed at things
With superficial faith . . . ah! how it stings
To know that all your art is but a fad;
To know that all your pose of being bad
And ruffling up conventional women's wings;
That all the loves of which your poor muse sings
But marks you down as one stupendous cad.

How it must hurt to know the bitter zest
Of never reaching any unknown lands,
Of never knowing that divine unrest
That comes to him whose spirit understands,
To reach at all the skies upon your quest
With all the suns and stars beyond your hands.

A FRAGMENT

In what remembered hour,
In what far distant lands,
Shall I hold like some strange flower
The petals of her hands?

PATCHIN PLACE NOCTURNES

I

Softly let us go
From this dear room . . . the night's
Swift currents ebb and flow
With sharp, street lights.

Softly let us go
With trembling, clasped fingers.
How should we children know
That passion lingers?

II

The shadows fall;
Each interlaces
Upon the wall
In checkered spaces.

A phonograph
Is heard somewhere.
A woman's laugh
Dies on the air.

The night's hot breath
Is close. It slips
Like the hands of Death
Across the lips.

A clothes line sags
From a window box
With limp, wet rags
And colored socks.

PATCHIN PLACE NOCTURNES

The shadows fall;
Each interlaces
Upon the wall
In checkered spaces.

III

The window where I saw your questioning face
Is now a vacant, solitary place.

The silent door, the quiet, quiet hall
Draped heavily with shadows at evenfall.

The touch of burning hands . . . the days of grace . . .
The memory of your love in Patchin Place.

THE KING

(FOR WALTER ADOLPHE ROBERTS)

Nothing unfound and all the world his own . . .
Women of slender hands with scented flowers;
Sad violins to lull him in those hours
Of pomp when in a crowd one dreams alone;
Gay cavaliers and arms and hosts unknown
To do his princely conquests; titan's powers;
Plowed fields; cities; mines; castles; high towers;
Huge subject nations yoked about his throne.

Yet once it was that he was young . . . he kissed
A lady's fingers on his bended knees,
Begging a token of lace about her wrist;
But glancing o'er his back the young king sees
Her eyes give promise to a youth fame missed . . .
How dull are then his tawdry victories.

SONG

Oh, the dawn is grey and my love is old,
Shrunk and haggard she stoops along
With her cheerless lips that have learned to scold,
Palsied hands that once filled me with song.

It is pitiful now to see her so,
To taste her voice and feel her eyes. . . .
I, too, am old and I ought to know,
But what shall we do when our memory dies?

WHEN THE HEART AWAKENS

Let us forget that love is like a song
Life sings to lull the spirit's endless fears. . . .
Miladi, echoes fill our willing ears
The lonely gods are jealous of . . . the strong
High inspiration that ignores wrong. . . .
For what grim need have we of lovers' tears?
The morning dawns and when the night appears
Love can find refuge hidden in the throng.

The heart awakens and the strength of spring
Lays heavy silence on the old refrain
That lovers sigh about and poets sing. . . .
So swift are we to squander what we gain
That when love thrills us with its echoing
We sink all beauty in a world of pain.

THE HERO

I saw the great procession come,
He proudly riding there.
I clutched our baby's hand, swept dumb
With my despair.

He seemed so proud, so straight and proud
Upon his horse. His sword
Flashed like a light above the crowd. . . .
My lover-lord!

They cheered his name. He bowed and smiled
With that fine ease and then
Moved out of sight. I took our child
Back home again.

THE SIMPLE FLESH

(FOR HARRY KEMP)

I weary of solemnity, of proud,
High dullness and of feeble hands that seek
The pulse of splendid power, but are weak
With listening to the fury of the crowd.
Oh, give us gruff old temple-smashers, loud
Of tongue; swashbucklers; lovers of the bleak,
Grim battle in the dawn, yet who are meek
Enough to kneel unto their gods, heads bowed.

So many things await destruction still . . .
Empires, rulers, clans of rich disdain,
Man's golden dignity, his feeble will,
His sly devices and his whispered gain.
Give us the simple flesh, the age-old thrill
Of humble men and women once again.

THE PRAYER OF A CERTAIN JUGGLER OF WORDS

I have spent the gifts that were mine to waste,
Borrowed and sold my hopes of heaven,
The trinkets are brass, the jewels paste . . .
Mother of God, am I forgiven?

A feather that floats in the moon's grey beams,
A song that is lost ere the heart counts seven,
The bitter dust of deathless dreams . . .
Mother of God, am I forgiven?

The agony of eyes and sleepless sleep,
The voice of beauty, broken, uneven,
The murmur of music beneath the deep . . .
Mother of God, am I forgiven?

LITTLE GIRL

(FOR DOROTHY MARGUERITE)

Little girl with your big eyes
Like saucers
Full of strawberries and cream,
Why do you smile so archly?
Wisdom speaks early
Through simple channels,
I fancy,
But are strawberries and cream wisdom?

THE AFTER DAWN

There is the sound of music in distant spaces
And the voice of the flesh is like heavy thunder;
Here of all the heavenly places
We have swept our dull, dull sighs asunder.

There are trembling hands that are locked in passion,
There are whispers that fill the four cracked walls,
And an ancient silence in a time-worn fashion
Upon the spirit in the small room falls.

What shall be said now . . . do the hot, clasped fingers
Make utterance louder than pleasure or pain?
A touch of deliberate ecstasy lingers
And falls and rises and falls again.

Then let us bestir and look out at the morning,
The night has sped swiftly and suddenly dies;
Kiss me and smile. . . . The heart's hot warning
Arouses new burdens and prophecies.

THE BATTLE

You delved in grim philosophies; in creeds
Outworn with ancient handling; both in frail,
Creative spurts of beauty and in stale
Forgotten volumes of forgotten needs.
You saw the flowers, catalogued the weeds
With gritty fervor, while the pale,
Sad poets claimed your heart, and now you fail
To sing because your wasted spirit bleeds.

You sought the unexplored on the earth,
Pursued faint shadows like a thoughtless elf,
You theorized on love and death and birth,
Lived years with dusty books upon the shelf,
Then gave life up as though it lacked all worth
Because you lost the battle with yourself.

MARJANEH

(FOR MILADI)

We should not be too soon
With swift demands,
Nor move too swift on noon . . .
Yet, love, thy hands!

We should not fail our trust,
Nor forge new bands,
But hunger in the dust . . .
Yet, love, thy hands!

THE DUSK

(FOR MERLE HERSEY)

The room is stilled;
These speechless walls
Seem strangely filled
As silence falls.

Your hands, your grace . . .
These gentle things
Sing in this place
Like viol strings.

This chair, this glass . . .
Time has its way:
"Let beauty pass
With fading day."

CAPTAIN GEORGES GUYNEMER

A Shepherd of the Skies

You were a shepherd of the skies, who knew
The unseen valleys of the air like one
That lived his life among the hills, and through
The dusty pathways of the clouds you spun
Upon your shining wings, a knight that flew
Against the golden empire of the sun.

O shepherd of the skies, upon your flight,
The heartbeat of the engine in your ears,
You knew the depths and wonder of the night,
The throbbing silence as the dawn appears
When climbing to some strange and splendid height
You challenged like a god the mighty spheres.

Beneath you was that spectacle of hell,
But 'round you were the snow-white clouds, the strong
Swift piling of them when the thunder fell,
The after glory as you soared along,
The earth great ages distant, and its spell
A muffled echo of remembered song.

Far, far below you at a single glance
Wild flocks of birds were; underneath them spread
The silent cities, and above, perchance,
The drone of flyers that before you fled,
Then everywhere the frozen fields of France,
Slopes where the battles raged, the dead.

CAPTAIN GEORGES GUYNEMER

A knight that sallied forth all unafraid
Upon those shining wings; his lance at rest,
Armed for the swift attack,—the sudden raid,
The tourney with an uninvited guest,
Who met the enemy where none might aid,
A lonely knight upon a splendid quest.

Shall they tell of the end? Perhaps, they too
Fell in the gust of death when it was done.
O shepherd of the skies, what can we do
When all these battles have been lost and won
For all the knights on shining wings who flew
Against the golden empire of the sun?

THE HALF-BAKED ONES

(FOR RICHARDSON WRIGHT)

*The great gods love as only the great gods can,
But the gift of a god is the gift of a man . . .
To love and be loved by a woman.*

* * * * *

They met . . . those two . . . and did not wonder whether
'Twas love they claimed, but clung like death together.
Their home . . . three tiny rooms in Patchin Place,
A bit of street that seemed a touch of grace
Against the Night Court where on summer nights
The shrieks of drunken prisoners pierce the heights
Of star-lit silences . . . a walled-in street
Where modern life and age-old romance meet.
Here dwelt the artists, writers and the crew
Who live upon the dreams of things they do.
Big Marley Sands, the poet, clumsy, crude,
But like a god of flaming strength, imbued
With artistry and now and then the gift
Of sudden genius . . . born out west, and swift
In speech, condemning right and left, but still
Divinely fired. Then, the broken, tongueless will
Of Amy Munson, living on the crust,
The shell of wasted faith, upon the past,
The semblance of a mighty love that cast
It's shadow on her weak, dim life . . . a kind
Of shaded lamp, a faded, feeble mind
That renders service of the lips, but not
The heart . . . a wisp of flesh that love forgot;
Cal Buxton, buccaneer of hearts; O'Neal,
The author of two slender books of real,
And singing Irish verse; three wrecks of stale,

THE HALF-BAKED ONES

Grim womanhood who fled before the gale
That heralded some feeble early passion,
Who wore their dresses with Bohemian fashion;
And then the poet Randolph and his wife
Swept back and forth across the seas of life.
He was the sort who live on hope, the kind
Of man who now and then uplifts the mind
With music if the fates conspire so,
A man of promise as men come and go;
Yet fated for defeat unless he brought
His victory from battles that are fought
And lost. The woman had belief. She knew
She loved. Upon that love, as people do,
Her faith found strength in love alone, and grew.
While goodness knows he didn't doubt his part . . .
He felt himself a perfect god of art.
How true it is that poets always claim
From shreds of things the cherished rights of fame
Before they've earned them. Yet, to her he seemed
A great, a lovely spirit . . . so she dreamed
Of coming conquests with a heart of song,
And on her strength he sang and grew quite strong.

He took . . . she gave . . . around the blazing fire
He built his courage on her swift desire.
How easy to be great with those who hold
Us dear . . . to friends our words are priceless gold,
Our theories valuable, our viewpoints shrewd.
Most of the lions in their set, imbued
With glory, lived upon some passing flare.
They stripped their meagre, silly spirits bare,
Called it "new poetry" . . . new everything . . .
Yet not a Reese among them who could sing . . .
One can be great and still do nothing there,
Among the cliques and clans of Washington Square.

No matter what he did it came out wrong,
But still he dared to claim that he was strong

THE HALF-BAKED ONES

Like all weak men who turn their loves to song.
Her life was but a vain apology
For every weakness of his poetry.
"He's young . . . he possibly may learn that life
Is not a thing of murk and grime and strife
Without a glimmer of immortal light" . . .

So was it that the woman lost her fight.
When first he started publishing his things
Some few who trust a man that only sings,
Praising everything that he may do,
Placed him upon an unearned height. Too soon
He stood alone . . . dawn in the lap of noon . . .
The woman's faith that burned unendingly,
Left him to live on praise and wander free
Through all the labyrinths that genius gives
To genius.

* * * * *

A critic, famed and lauded, read a line
A friend had quoted . . . something really fine,
An epic note where Randolph cast the spell
That many dreamers have before they fell.
The critic trusted chance and called to find
If genius lurked within this unknown mind.
I often pause to think how close he came
To winning just a few stray words of fame.

Amid their friends the critic found the two,
The poet and his wife, and that loud crew
Who scorned all law. Around the fireside
He heard the standards of his art defied,
And wondered: "Can a man lay low
The law that governs us who come and go
Beneath the lash of flesh, the money lust,
The crimson flattery, the bitter crust,
On which men dare to dream and live and toil?"
He thought of this and felt his anger boil

THE HALF-BAKED ONES

Beyond control. These whippersnappers dared
To open up what many masters spared.
He heard the thundering poet, Marley Sands,
Orate on freedom, waving heavy hands
As though to make his arguments more clear.
But what he said meant only this: Do what
You will, if you are great . . . no door is shut
To genius . . . roar and howl and yell and scream,
Believe in naught but self and what you dream.

The critic watched her sitting there . . . his wife . . .
The thought of it went through him like a knife.
"These praters claim all freedom to the great,"
He said, and smiled into her eyes. "I'd wait
If I were they until I learned to see
If genius lived in them and left them free."

Randolph expressed in gentle verse that stood
For all the things within him that were good,
His tiny world of thought . . . the pity being
That he had ears that heard not and eyes unseeing. . . .
But yet he sang well . . . there was something new
And beautiful in all that he would do.
The charm lay in the touch of grace. And yet
Her love so flamed that she could not forget
An instant. Thus it was his poems flared
To some few honors just because she cared.
She listened by the fireside, her slender feet
Perched on the fender . . . it was only meet
That she should sacrifice herself, she said
"The world will judge me after I am dead."
"He must be great," whispered she at times
To quiet her distrust of endless rhymes
Pouring from his pen.

The critic came
Again and looked upon this bitter game.
"You fling your secrets to the winds," he cried,
"There must be things that even poets hide,

THE HALF-BAKED ONES

The world is busy . . . does it care to know
Each idle pain, each shading of your woe,
Describe yourself but not as though that means
You are the thing that moves behind the scenes
Whose vast importance life is bursting for . . .
Forget yourself a moment . . . lock that door
Forever and awaken to the power
That builds an empire from a broken hour."
But when the critic spoke that way, the few
Who sat around the little room, outgrew
Their patience, slandered such a faith. She heard
The robust poet, Marley Sands, bestirred
To mighty anger at the things he chose to claim
"Were dull convention and the death of fame."
The critic listened, then remarked: "Why pause
To dwell upon the dull effects, the cause
Of fame. I have no battle there. I seek
For genius that is unafraid to speak
Of living things in strange and splendid keys;
A poet, say, whose voice builds mysteries
From ordinary days, from human things of life;
Who plunges into darkness, joy and strife,
Who dares to sing of what he sees, who fills
Us with a majesty that genius wills
Out of the few. God, give us men to do
The deeds of dreams."

The critic ceased. He knew
In that dark circle of dejected faces
How much he'd lost. His mind pierced many spaces
Within a moment. Putting by his fears
He saw her eyes were red with foolish tears.
Their hands met in the silence. Then he went.
Behind, the gay Bohemian's merriment
Went on at his expense . . . her own despair
Filled every fibre . . . she rose and left them there.

Marley Sands went ranting on about
freedom; and the poet Randolph's shout

THE HALF-BAKED ONES

Of laughter following every bellowed phrase.
She threw herself upon the bed. "Such praise
As their's he lives upon," she moaned, her face
Pressed hard against the pillows. "Give him grace
To earn his soul," she sobbed, "O let him gain
His dreams; let him forget his idle pain."

Could you have seen this dreamer first,
Before his spirit satisfied its thirst
For petty grandeur, little talk and praise;
Could you have seen him in those early days
You would have loved him for his smile, his grace,
The eyes like shaded candles in his face;
Cool, slender fingers . . . dreaming all the time,
And turning every dream into a rhyme.
So are they first . . . the city's huge hands grip
Them harshly at the throat and swiftly strip
Their shallow spirits, leaving but a shell,
Mere broken beauty, like a tongueless bell
That hangs in place. That is the city's way
With weaklings.

When the critic left that night,
She knew that he had given up the fight.
She heard them arguing until the dawn,
The heavy silence after they were gone,
Then his slow footsteps to the room. She lay
Quite still and waited for the things he'd say
For leaving them alone. "O stop," she sobbed,
"Our day is dead . . . you and your kind have robbed
Me of my dreams. I think I almost hate
Our endless seeking, searching, and this state
Of self-desire, silly praise and murk,
This half-baked world."

She raised herself upon
The bed and watched him through the drizzling dawn,

THE HALF-BAKED ONES

While he looked out the window. Had he turned
He would have seen that love within her burned,
An open flame. Her hair fell down her face;
The robe she wore . . . a gentle thing of lace . . .
Had fallen from one shoulder and the white
Firm breasts made her a simple, pleasing sight.
He didn't turn and in that act he lost
Her faith, her love, her hopes . . . the coming cost
Was not upon him yet . . . she lived and fed
His daily wants.

Three months went by. They knew
That underneath her bosom slowly grew
The semblance of their broken selves . . . their child.
It almost healed and halfway reconciled
Her to her lot . . . in him the bitterness
Had grown upon her endless graciousness,
Her body and its wonders . . . now that went
Into her offspring and her strength was spent.
These days they had but little funds . . . and food,
It barely cared for her . . . his growing mood
Was one of anger. Often when he laid
His hand upon their door he wished he'd stayed
Among his friends. He found her usually
Bent o'er the washing, sewing busily
At other times, or dreaming out an hour
Beside the window. Once he came and found
Her prone upon the floor . . . she made no sound.
He lifted up her body and the head
Dropped sluggishly against his arm. In bed
She soon recovered and his whitened face
Gave her a moment of exquisite grace.

Time sped and he forgot. A friend who knew
Her near condition and what best to do,
Lived just across the hall. One night she heard
The poet stamp downstairs in anger, then
Slam hard the door and not return again.
Each fibre in her spirit roused and stirred.

THE HALF-BAKED ONES

She feared to break upon that solitude
That waited her, but dauntless as her word
She gently tapped upon the door.
No answer came . . . as gently then once more
She tapped and waited. Still no word. Without
More hesitation, scorning every doubt
She entered. There before the fire lay the still
Soft body of the poet's wife . . . her will
Had left her prone. The friend called other aid,
Bore her to bed and close beside her stayed
Through all the darkened hours. Shall we tell
The secrets of the night . . . enough the spell
Of death lay on her and the morning light
Was witness to the spirit's sudden flight . . .
The spirit's sudden flight . . . let's say, the two
That fled with that one death. 'Tis well we drew
A curtain on the scene when Randolph learned
That now no longer in his home there burned
That flaming soul, who sacrificed herself
To put his books upon Fame's dusty shelf.
The message found him with his friends. He read
The short, sharp words, "Your dear, sweet wife is dead.
Come home at once." He went alone and saw
Her lying white and still. His heart went raw.
And in an instant he had learned how much
Depends upon the outside world . . . the touch
Of finite things that link infinity
With those that dare to dwell and dream quite free.
He fell upon his knees beside her clay
"I've thrown the dearest gift of all away."
He sobbed as cowards do.

Oh, how it hurts to love the things life gives;
To those who dare a little life forgives. . . .
A toss of dice with one's whole world at stake;
A chance; to always give more than we take;
A strength that wastes itself in strength. . . .

THE HALF-BAKED ONES

He only knew that all he'd dared and done
Had cost her more than she had ever won.
A dream that has dissolved within a dream,
And only then did all her graces seem
As lovely as they were, for how death grips
When it has set its silence on the lips
Of those we love.

Too weak to end it all,
Too weak to carry on, these weaklings fall
Into a twilight land and go their way
Alone, in withered hope and dull decay.
Her shoulders bore his burdens every time,
Her glory raised his silly gift of rhyme
To something finer than himself in spite
Of weakness, laziness and lust . . . his light
Was but a spluttering, sickly candle flame
Held in a broken socket . . . then she came
With singing strength and trimmed the dirty wick,
And with her love as socket did a trick
That blinded both. He'd whined his feeble sorrows
In her ears and sung of vain to-morrows.
She let him lay his fingers on her cheek
Sing to her, talk to her and be proud and weak.

I shall not estimate how much it cost,
Nor set a seal upon the things he'd lost.
Enough that he still drifts around the streets
Worn out from dreaming of his dull defeats.

He hangs around Bohemian restaurants,
Their shallowness supplying all his wants.
They'll listen anyhow amid their cups
To filthy stories told by idle pups.
Now and again a verse of his, a line
Has some stray touch of vision once divine.
His books, mere broken promises . . . his pen
Shall never gain it's winged speed again.

THE HALF-BAKED ONES

There are so many Randolphs who aspire
To shape their destinies from dead desire;
So many poets . . . that alas, their fight
Is lost in the beginning . . . as a light
Whose wick is newly trimmed and brightly burns,
But yet the gods in their divinity forget
And leave the lamp half-filled with oil.

The honest things, the simple truths, the trust
Divine . . . so close a handful of mere dust
Becomes a living house of beauty . . . great
Are higher men, the pomp of wealth, of state,
But in some lovely spirit penitent,
All nature blends and every art is spent
For real success . . . but Randolph lost his heart
By breaking down the rudiments of art.
Her sacrifice, her death, her slender hands
That molded him . . . with even Marley Sands,
The rough, the loud, he would have understood,
Yet Randolph mourned and never could.

HINDSIGHT

I come back to you now many times
Tired of my silly rhymes
As a horse grown weary of its load
Halting on the dusty road.
You were older by twenty years than me,
(My first faint breath of reality)
You spoke of a child, long dead . . . a man
Who killed your hopes when your marriage began.
These, and so many things of grief
In which my childhood found relief.
I worked, I slaved for you like one
Whose daily chores are never done.
When you were ill I kissed your slim,
White hands. I humored every whim,
Now as I look behind and know
That all your tales of ageless woe
Were only shadows . . . just a pose,
I reap the crop a dreamer sows.
But yet how much would I have lost
Had you not verified the cost.
Once in his life each boy must give
His soul into a woman's hands
Whose losses taught her how to live.

AMY MUNSON

(FOR WILLIAM SANGER)

Summer in Patchin Place! The bitter heat
Lies like a blanket on the little street.
The very clothes-line in the courtyard sags
With weary and bedraggled looking rags.
Cushman's Bakery seems half asleep,
And in the heat the August hours creep
With sluggish speed. The Night Court's tongue is stilled,
Though every broiling cell is jammed and filled
With sweating prisoners. Our grocery store
Is quiet; Mister Bauer fills the door
In patient invitation but the trade
Grows dull. "The Mayor," singing, is waylaid
By Mrs. Wedes, lectured on the crime
Of drinking for perhaps the thousandth time.
We watch him totter up his steps. Our laugh
Is broken by an ancient phonograph
Across the way. It gets so hot at last
We doze awhile. The "L" trains rumble past.
The family on the bottom floor commence
Anew an ancient war of words. The tense,
Long days without good food destroy our chance
To rest . . . we toss like patients in a fever.
Some poor fool tries to sing and stops. We sweat
Half dressed and hungry, trying to forget
Our poverty, our failure, but it seems
Too hot to even talk about our dreams.
So passes by the day. The night comes down
Like some tremendous fog upon the town.
The heat grows worse. We seek the roof. The sky
Is blossoming with stars. The darkness falls
A muddy fluid 'round the prison walls.

AMY MUNSON

Some drunken thing begins to shriek. Each starts
To talk as might some actors, in their parts
Learned well. We mention goodly things to eat.
Around us are the roofs, below the street
Filled with a crowd of yelling children, then
The shouts of drunken prisoners again.

One of the "crowd" finds energy enough
To tell us why he hasn't sold his "stuff."
Tall Ballard Wexton, patient as the dead,
Decides some issue, gravely nods his head
In wisdom. Margaret O'Rourke, who keeps
Our courage up, who seldom eats or sleeps
So busy is she with our troubles, fills
The night with sudden laughter at some tale
That Harry Kemp is telling. Waldo, frail
And nervous, answers sharply back. They pause
While someone else cries down conventional laws.
So then we start the long, long night. Our fears,
Our failures and despair, each disappears.
We praise ourselves. We have our dreams at least.
We have our hopes. Who wants an idle feast
When one has friends and visions?

There was but one in all the bitter crew
Who had the visioned strength to write, and who
Had earned his place as poet . . . Harry Kemp.
We were a jaded crew, we half-baked fools
Who railed at facts and scorned all human schools
Of thought for rubbish. What did we possess
That set us high above the sordidness
Around us in the slums? We had no gifts.
We built our temples crudely. Idle shifts
In reason, nothing more nor less. We claimed
Our genius when we should have been ashamed
To hold our heads up in a world of men.
Poor Amy Munson understood, but then

AMY MUNSON

She was a ghost of all the world's rich sorrows,
Forgotten yesterdays and vain to-morrows.
She held aloof and lived alone in two
Small rooms upon the second floor. She knew
Our breed. Poor Amy fighting hard to learn
What oil made lamps of human genius burn.
I often hear her thin, sharp voice and see
Her eyes and wonder how such things can be
In life's great house of beauty. Yet she clung
To faith as might a person that was strung
Up by a mob . . . the dead flesh dangling there
In awesome silence. I would wonder where
She earned the law of dignity. For one
So slender, with her crushed existence done,
I found amazing strength. The skin was drawn
Like parchment on her bones. The face was wan
With agony, the eyes asleep. She said
No word to us but tossed her tiny head
In laughable disdain. We were a crowd
Of violent and flaming creatures, loud
In speech but slow in action; sworn to fight
Convention and the lofty ones whose might
Bore heavily upon the earth. We swore
Against all laws, declared an endless war
Upon the other artists who had won
Some place within the glory of the sun.
We doubted everything. We trusted none.
Our feeble verse, our articles, our stories . . .
What we would do! . . . Ah, these were really glories.
How pitiful it seems now that I look behind.
Yet then . . . how can existence be defined
Among a lot of idlers at a shrine
That Harry Kemp had touched and made divine?
We couldn't sell our "stuff." Who would have cared
To read of superficial spirits bared
Unto the ugly light? No editors
Admitted us beyond their outer doors.

AMY MUNSON

We fought in spite of that. I will admit
That there was some faint hint of actual grit
Displayed among our crew. I can recall
The day I found young Waldo by the wall,
His starved, slim body crumpled up, his hair
Grown down about a face of real despair.
That must have been divine—that pain. He ate
That night a feast of truly royal state
Upon the last few pennies we possessed.
To starve and know you cannot win . . . he did
The thing . . . a half diseased and scrawny kid
From Pennsylvania . . . how it must have hurt
To fall when one attains a feeble spurt
Of glory and expires? Yes, some things
Exist about which no one ever sings
In idle verse.

Among the rest not one possessed the touch
Of genius, only splendid dreams . . . not such
A wonder as would hold the world, but just
A color and a hint. Born in the dust
Of country towns and villages, they found
In Greenwich Village atmosphere the kind
That filled a longing in a burning mind.
Some sell their work to-day. A pitiful
Expression of the lack of value; dull,
Extremely dull, yet now and then, with some
Stray picture or a line that leaves one dumb
With anguish.

Cal Buxton, dwelt within an endless dream,
A saving fellow, always patiently
Creating stories which he read to me
With charming self-delight. A style so thick
With college erudition that the click
Of heavy words filled every page. He sold
A tale or two, it left the poor child cold.
It almost ruined every dream he had.
I often used to watch the silly lad

AMY MUNSON

Grind out his splendid phrases one by one
And toil until he had a story done.
He lived in my apartment for a time
When I had deified all verse, the rhyme
Beyond all flesh and spirit. We were there
Among that sweating crowd of dreamers, bare
Of pocket and of mind but rich in speech,
Full half the summer.

Meeker came in to see us in those days,
A slender poet with the oddest ways,
So serious and full of words. Two frail,
Thin books already published and grown stale
Save for a mighty line that he had staked
His future on and then had ceased . . . half baked.
An egotist, a bore, another sort
Who are the playthings of their fancy, sport
For every change in fate.

To Amy . . . well
The old days cast upon her heart a spell,
A mighty grandeur which she loved to talk about.
She read us lectures, Cal and me, without
The slightest sense of humor . . . such a wisp
She was that life had burnt into a crisp.
Imagining that she had come from those
In high estate, she looked on friends and foes
With equal pity. What a shame. I knew
That she had suffered all her weak life through.
Yet why? Could she have blamed the rest? She did.
Within her virgin breast she always hid
A warm dislike of "lower things," as she
Expressed it in her selfish way to me.
"My birth, my breeding," she would say, "were more
Than ordinary matters once. I wore
The panoply of family honor then."
She might raise up her slender fingers when

AMY MUNSON

She said such things, her little cigarette
Aglow. The starved, slim form could not forget
Its cheated hours, ever. "I knew what
It meant to live behind the doors kept shut
Against the dirty mob. I went abroad
For study, had rich clothes, knew all the fine
Old families in my native state. Old wine,
Old riches, blood . . . and then our poverty."
Whenever this same point was voiced to me
Her voice would falter or else stop entire.
I watched this cenotaph of dead desire
In vulgar greediness. I liked her though.
So sad she was, so frail. Such flaming woe.
The grey, grey hair, the delicate, white hands. . . .
There are some things the rough soul understands.
Her story was the truth. Her room, her slim,
Torn body . . . it was not an idle whim
This past. She starved at times, yet held her head
Up in the street as one might do well fed.
Her little place forever painted blue
Was her own faded nature through and through.
The couch beside the window and one chair
Drawn up before the fireplace. The bare,
Rough floor, one picture of a kneeling girl . . .
Herself . . . how was it that her fate should hurl
This helpless bit of flesh into the place
And stamp its misery upon her face?

Disjointedly I learned her story from
The very start. How idle youth was dumb
With longing for a love. She feared it so.
In all the people of that gaudy show
Wherein she moved, no hero came. It seemed
To me that she had only moved and dreamed
As might a hermit on a lonely isle.
Around her surged the angry waters, still
She kept serene and held her feeble will
At anchor. Pitiful. She told me then
How she had learned to love just three real men.

AMY MUNSON

The first, an idle fellow, who possessed
A healthy income and no mind. The rest?
At some friend's house he told her . . . she gave in.
And even then she thought it was a sin
To have a man's hands touch her face. He gripped
Her to himself and held her thus close-lipped
And trembling. All alone that night she heard
His whisper in the hall. So moved, so stirred
Was she that first she could not think. When strength
Returned she opened up the door. The length
Of hall was dark but at the end she saw
Him entering a room. Here was the flaw.
There met him at the door two arms, a face
Pressed to his own. He disappeared. She stood
There in her gracious negligence. Nor could
She move a limb nor speak. Another one
Of life's grim disillusion had been done.

The next . . . a doctor who administered
A woman ten years older. She was stirred
Out of her slumber by his tenderness,
His sympathy, his strength, his gentleness.
But he was married, so it came to nought.
The third . . . an artist poverty had brought
Down to the last grim whisper of regret.
A half-baked dreamer whose small sun had set.
She loved him madly in those generous days
Past thirty when a woman gladly pays
In full for all her silence, interest
Compounded since the start. Another jest
Of nature. In a brief, swift summer all
Her dreams had tumbled 'round her ears. The pall
That followed . . . then, he ran away with some
Soft bit of clever femininity,
The kind that wrap one close and leave one dumb
A sort of eyeless, tongueless poverty
In spirit. Amy died upon her feet;
Her grave this little room, this tiny street

AMY MUNSON

Tucked in a corner of New York. I crossed
Her path three years beyond the day she lost
Her third, great lover. All she had . . . the sketch
That hung upon her wall, drawn by the wretch
Before he folded up his tents . . . a thing
That gripped the eyes and left one wondering
How genius can destroy itself with genius.

The hot, long summer hung like a disease
Upon the flesh. The slender row of trees;
The blistered windows. Mrs. Wedes, grew
To be like memories one always knew.
We grouped each night upon the roof . . . our crowd.
Imagined that we only were endowed
With brilliance; argued, wrangled, wrote and raked
Our silly minds for new ideas. Half baked.
Ye gods, I wonder how we stood the heat
That filled that crowded, dingy, little street.
And how we stood ourselves. No humor then.
We were not flesh of women nor of men.
Mere ghosts that chattered in a ghostly land,
A broken and disheartened, vulgar band
Of egoists. Day after day the grind
Continued in the world we hung behind
With failure staring each one in the face. . . .
The Don Quixotes of our Patchin Place.
Each evening when I dared return without
Disposing of my manuscripts, in doubt
Of self and every old desire, I'd see
Old Mrs. Wedes in her window, free
And never worrying at all. It kept
My courage up. Young Waldo Merrett wept
At fate and all his idle hopes. It hurt
To see those men cling to a woman's skirt.
Yet Margaret O'Rourke held them to earth
By finding in their weakness, points of worth.

* * * * *

AMY MUNSON

There came a night of fierce and burning heat
That killed the hearts of those in Patchin Street.
We sweltered even on the roof. The sun
Had set upon a heathen crowd . . . it won
A bloodless, sweaty battle with the dusk.
We stretched out side by side upon the high
And ancient roof, beneath the star-filled sky.
We listened to a shrieking prisoner,
A murderess, until the horror of her
Sunk in our weakened flesh like pain. We slept
By fitful starts. The heavy hours crept.
I lay awake until it seemed to me
As though I'd lost my mind. The clock struck three
Upon the night court tower. I got up.
The sky was like a many jewelled cup
Of dark, blue porcelain. Below the air
Had settled in a stagnant pool. Down there
Was like an opened coffin, close and still.
I took a long, deep breath. There lingers still
The memory of gas in that close hall.
Miss Munson's door was closed. It opened hard.
I found that she quite clumsily had barred
The way with chains. The air was stifling hot,
While she lay on the floor tied in a knot
Of sleepless agony. Her fragile form
Seemed like a feather in my arms. The warm,
Thick air laid on my lungs like syrup. There
It was I learned how bitter is despair
When one gives up all hope and flings away
The cheap, cheap treasures of the heart. Her grey,
Thin face was withered . . . she was dead. The war
Of life had closed. I crossed her arms upon
Her wasted breasts. The first flush of the dawn
Now rested on the window sill.

GESTURES IN IVORY

(SONNET SEQUENCE FOR MILADI)

I

We've risen winged on the breathless night
And gazed across the great expanse of sky
Where stars sink flaming through the void and die
In final gasps of beauty and of light. . . .
Now all the giant echoes of our flight,
In clouds of music that have thundered by
Are dwindling in a last despairing cry
Like some rare moment shrunk out of sight.

The splendid gift that makes our dream so sweet,
That teaches us to find in beauty's thrall
The wasting chords that make you throb and beat,
To have all life wait on your beck and call,
And rise up singing from the worst defeat . . .
Miladi, yours the greatest gift of all.

II

Ah! you have hoarded what you might have spent
When giving was so sweet a thing in you,
And now that our resplendent night is through
Consider well my purpose and intent. . . .
I am no fleshless dreamer penitent
Of that which even one could never do
Who dares to linger when the game is new. . . .
The oak grows as the early twig is bent.

This friendship might be as a simple flower
Whose roots are gaining strength through friendly hands,

GESTURES IN IVORY

Or like some strange and half exotic power
That the possessor never understands,
It might have turned in that one lovely hour
To something splendid in our clumsy hands.

III

There as I talked to you across the wire
The night drew close around us like a veil,
For I had found a single, singing trail
O'er which you came to me like living fire.
Then all the things that you and I aspire
To win from fate like some romantic tale
Fresh from a dreamer's pen, seemed dull and frail
Beside the beauty of a great desire.

And I who met you weeping once among
The stars, your hair in darkened strands of light
That round your face like gentle fingers clung . . .
Paused for a single moment in the night
To wonder if the songs that I had sung
Found you with faith to dare the splendid flight.

IV

Your voice was like the echo of a song
That floated to me from that wondrous hour,
Out from the night from love's far lonely tower
Beyond the pulse and beat of all the throng.
Such dreams as these make singing spirits strong.
And mighty gods grow conscious of their power,
Or touch with glory some dejected flower
Beneath the blind steps of a sightless wrong.

Love comes in calico or satin gown
Out of the night with dainty tripping feet
And meets one in the shadows of the town
Amid the tinsel music of the street. . . .

GESTURES IN IVORY

I only know I dared not trample down
A dream that was at once so strange and sweet.

V

You came to me laden with gifts, my sweet. . . .
The giving was good, so clean a thing
That even I found virgin songs to sing
That were not echoes of some dead defeat.
Few loves there are that find us armed to meet
The wasted spirit's roused desiring;
Vain, vain were all the gifts that you might bring
Save love with her own hands performed the feat.

Ah! lay your cool white fingers at my face
That I might touch the love that stirs me so,
Hand in hand then let us fly through space,
Look back on earth where people come and go,
Remembering that we come of that same race
Yet have created worlds they cannot know.

VI

Life's bleeding hands are at my throat. . . . I see
The heavy shadows gather in her eyes
And all her arts, her horde of ready lies
No longer thrill me with their subtlety.
Though she still holds me I have shaken free
The lust of bitterness and vain surprise;
For every vision that within me dies
I gain the strength of an eternal mystery.

I've known a heart that does not dream of fear,
A spirit-flaming with eternal light,
Music that only the immortals hear
Amid the open silences of night. . . .
Past the tumult that fills the weary ear
I know such beauty as may laugh at might.

GESTURES IN IVORY

VII

A dearth of things . . . the things we hunger for;
A few stray moments we have learned to trust;
The touch of hands that wither in the dust;
Some trinkets added to our slender store;
A lovely room somewhere on which the door
Of time shuts in a sudden windy gust
Of fury; little stabs of beauty; rust
That gathers on the latchspring; dreams that soar.

Now through the distant corners of the earth
Life sends us different ways, through many lands,
Yet where the voiceless dreamings shall have birth
The urge and passion of your slender hands,
The sharp, swift blaze of beauty . . . these are worth
Love's silence if the spirit understands.

VIII

You say that I am selfish and intent
Upon this shadow called myself, this thing
Of flesh and bones that strains itself to sing
Like one whose courage and desire are spent.
Don't place your faith in this frail instrument
When it is still, but when the wires ring
With music bought of rich remembering. . . .
That is its highest purpose and intent.

How helpless is the flesh beneath the hands
That strip it of its freedom for a song;
One like yourself who ever understands
Can pluck the right from out a world of wrong;
Come, help me tighten up my armor bands
So I may go to battle and be strong.

IX

The dusk is at the hour's end . . . one hour
My love, to dream, to pause a while before
This short, sweet evening close forevermore

GESTURES IN IVORY

As petals close around a lovely flower.
Let us retire to a lonely tower,
Mount winding stairs and close and lock the door
Forgetting for a moment that a war
Slays like a monster with despotic power.

With faces pressed against the windowpane
We'll watch the flaming, golden bars
Of this immortal daylight ebb and wane,
Then as the darkness cloaks the bitter scars
That give the shattered earth so deep a pain,
We'll lose our souls among the distant stars.

X

To hear your voice was like a distant sphere's
Soft echo past the outer rims of day
And all I had to tell you died away
Amid the music which had filled my ears.
Now every shadow near my spirit clears.
This heart that life had moulded out of clay
Is like an instrument on which you play
The greatest songs of all the changing years.

Then let us both remember that we dared
To live what we had dreamed, to spend with ease
Our hopes and fears and know that we have spared
No hoarded wealth that Love might wish to seize,
Believing that the ones who bravely bared
Their secrets quicken all the mysteries.

XI

I dared not call this growing love of ours
A singing imagery of human need
Until I knew that it was neither greed,
Nor idle hunger that the heart devours.

GESTURES IN IVORY

Days come when all of beauty's red, red flowers
Shall wither on the stem and turn to seed. . . .
We have been mad with love yet dare we heed
The thin, sharp voice that tells of dying powers?

I know, I know that everything men say
Conceals the lash, the sting, the fleshly halter;
Yet love, those of us who must surely pay
Are those that do not dream and always falter.
Come let us see beyond a single day,
And worship sin upon a scarlet altar.

XII

Beloved, how my heart cries out to you
Like some poor penitent upon his knees
Who seeks new visions of old mysteries,
And thinks to raise his failing hopes anew.
Alas, the treasures of the earth are few;
Life is a wilderness wherefrom one sees
The sunlight far above the close-grown trees,
Wherein we feebly dream our swift days through.

Behind our smiles we hide our tears, behind
Our tears, our dreams . . . this much we own
If one possesses the splendid gift to bind
Unto the spirit by his strength alone
That which he does not earn but lives to find
By taking chances with a dim unknown.

XIII

Now that we part let love say everything,
Still all the troubled whispers and despair.
We have possessed a dream . . . what do we care
For any aftermath of questioning?
Ah! let us join our frail, frail hands and sing . . .
Illusions are but bubbles filled with air

GESTURES IN IVORY

That burst like voiceless music when we dare
To sound the depths of life's dull muttering.

And let these roses be our yesterdays,
Each one a single, crimson flash of light,
For love is always free, it only stays
In all the speed and splendour of its flight
With those who go upon their separate ways
Along the hidden pathways of the night.

A SONG OF PATCHIN PLACE

Out of the mists, a hand, a smile,
Perhaps a friendly face
That lures the fancy yet awhile
To little Patchin Place.

The roar of Harry Kemp's good laughter,
Those dear, dear days of grace
That fill the heart these long months after
With thoughts of Patchin Place.

The tiny rooms, the kitchenette,
The screen that hid all trace
Of our small dinner table set
With style in Patchin Place.

A poem sold, then much to eat,
A bit of wine to chase
Away the echoes of defeat
With friends in Patchin Place.

One sewing in the easy chair . . .
All time cannot erase
The picture of her sitting there
In our own Patchin Place.

The touch of youth . . . how one could sing
When Winter's frowning face
Broke forth in smiles as laughing Spring
Came into Patchin Place.

UNIFORMS

(FOR MARGARET SANGER)

*Who shall sing war songs?
Monotonous war songs?
Are they not all alike?*

UNIFORMS

I

Soldiers, soldiers, thousands of soldiers
Across the plain like stalks of grain,
Soldiers, soldiers, thousands of soldiers.
From out the door a stream of them pours;
Along the street their tramping feet;
As a serpent's body the columns flow;
Soldiers, soldiers, thousands of soldiers.
Brown clad soldiers,
Guns on their shoulders,
Soldiers, soldiers, thousands of soldiers.
The wind dies down and the banners loop
The lithe flagpoles and fold and droop,
Soldiers, soldiers, thousands of soldiers.

A sharp command and the columns stand,
Another's heard and a column is stirred . . .
The shuffling feet and the drums that beat
Make one remember that flesh is sweet.
Soldiers, soldiers, thousands of soldiers
Filling the empty length of street.

Cantonments, shacks,
Straight, stiff backs,
Muddy roads,
And mules and loads;
Bugles and rifles,
A heat that stifles,
Soldiers, soldiers, thousands of soldiers.

UNIFORMS

Sweet, clean faces,
Empty spaces
Of dull and monotonous skies;
Tired eyes,
A sentry that grips
His rifle, clinching childish lips;
Soldiers, soldiers, thousands of soldiers
Drilling, drilling;
Evenings that sway
With sulky shadows at close of day.
What will they do
When the war is through,
These soldiers, soldiers, thousands of soldiers?

Weary forms
In heaving swarms,
Uphill and down
The things in brown,
And often after
The shattered sound
Of wasted laughter;
The world that is bound
By dreary nights
When the silence bites
Like a wound at the heart . . .
Soldiers, soldiers, thousands of soldiers.

What do they think of?
Music and love,
Of pleasure and pain,
These soldiers, soldiers, thousands of soldiers,
Dotting the plain?

Flowers, flowers, thousands of flowers
Crushed and trampled under foot;
Blood that kills the broken root,
Blood that dries on buried bones,
Cities a maze of tumbling stones,
Shattered forests and shattered towers. . . .
Flowers, flowers, thousands of flowers.

UNIFORMS

II

Around the parade ground they go,
Around and around and around
Like flies in thick molasses
Poured in a huge green saucer
And stirred by a child's spoon.
Dullness and darkness and death. . . .

White faces that smile;
Tall bodies;
Short bodies;
Square bodies;
Round bodies;
Crooked bodies;
Straight bodies;
Bodies, bodies, bodies.
Lumps of flesh moving automatically
Like logs in a muddy stream,
Crawling along at dusk
Against the ground
And disappearing sluggishly under open
doorways.

Uniforms gyrating idiotically;
Rifles pirouetting;
Commands dying on the still air;
Red-eyed sergeants thundering. . . .
Uniforms, uniforms, uniforms
Running against the earth
Queerly,
Insanely.
Madness, madness, madness.

UNIFORMS

What is it all about?
Say,
Am I crazy,
Are you?

House of painted ugliness;
Stoves belching rotten odors;
Dead men wandering around against the sky,
Men already marked, catalogued and filed
away for slaughter.
God! how they long for it, too.

No women,
No children,
No booze. . . .
Just hell.
A moral country behind them, refusing them
comfort or understanding.
Moral societies preaching to them.
Cadaverous females looking at them through
lorgnettes,
Like wild birds on thin, long legs.
Papers lecturing to them.
Guns waiting to bark at them.
Shouldn't they long for death?

Uniforms, uniforms, uniforms
Parading, drilling, marching.
Queer arms that move sharply;
Dead faces that frown;
Legs jumping suddenly;
Bodies slanting oddly . . .
Around and around and around the parade
they go
Like flies in a big green saucer
Filled with molasses
And stirred by a child's spoon.

SINGING IN CAMP

The blazing torches of the night!
Three thousand men singing
"Katy, beautiful Katy."
One's heart stands still at the volume of sound,
The earth trembles under the feet,
Can one ever forget?
The hollow in the hill used as an amphitheatre?
The faces rising in the faint light on three sides?
Down in the middle, on a platform upon which leaps and
jumps the lithe form of the leader,
Swinging his arms and shouting:
"Now try it again."
O! blazing torches of the night!

ON LEAVE

Hushed is the heart!
Hold me, O loved one, I go into the silence. . . .
I go back where life is a thing of angles and cubes,
I go back where the soul is barred up like a restless bird in
 a rusty cage,
I go back where inspiration is looked upon as a disease;
 where the whispering tongues of feeling are frightened
 into silence,
Grip me, O loved one . . . hushed is the heart.
Never one of these uniforms but wishes it was over.
Poor, sad, moving things that would be heroes . . . how can
 they speak?

I live with them, eat with them, talk to them, but am as a
 stranger in a strange land.
Orders are like whip strokes upon hurt eyes.
Their language is of the earth.
They speak a lewd, ominous tongue.
Hushed is the heart
In so great a solitude back there in camp!

BLEEDING HEART

Bleeding heart.

O army of ours, great bleeding heart!

Every soldier a drop of blood falling unheeded upon the
ground,

Every soldier a clot of blood congealing and hardening upon
the ground.

Bleeding heart, your stealing rhythm is the heavy tread of
four million men vanishing into the East. . . .

Rhythmical marching . . . rhythmical marching . . . sym-
phonies of flesh!

THE MACHINE STOPS—NOVEMBER, 1918

The machine stops with a grunt and a wheeze
Like a clumsy giant resting from a hot race.
An order has been issued
From G. H. Q.

"Cease firing at eleven A. M.!"

* * * * *

The sky is leaden,
Lying heavily over the earth like a tent
Appearing to sag in the middle,
The earth is exhausted.
It has no more strength,
Like a mother who has borne too many children,
It is unshapely and uneven.
The trees droop against a dull wind,
Their limbs barren.

* * * * *

Silence now!
The echoes hang disconsolately in the laps of the hills,
Disappearing slowly.
Thousands of faces come out of the mud,
Shapes of things move down gullies and emerge into the
desecrated day,
The hour has come . . . an armistice!
Those who have been driven into the slaughter house tremble
like feverish patients,
Rubbing filthy hands over their eyes,
Shaking themselves.
They start to cheer,
The words catch in their throats in clots of saliva,
Beyond, in the other lines, ghostly shapes protrude their
heads,
Wondering if a stray shot will pick them off.
Four years ended in a moment.

THE MACHINE STOPS—NOVEMBER, 1918

It cannot be, says a little knot of them, unstrapping their gas masks.

To some it is like a dash of cold water, to others only a change to be regarded calmly.

Around this particular group lie wrecks of wagons, artillery, horses, fences, factories, supplies, ammunition, bodies . . .

A shell had exploded there not ten minutes before,

Suddenly a bloody thing rises from the earth,

A bloody, sodden thing,

A hero!

His face is like overcooked liver,

The eyes mashed like eggs over his cheeks,

The mouth dripping. . . .

He gets to his feet in a blind agony of desire,

Echoes of sunlight still crash through his brain.

One hand is like a bunch of red ribbons dangling at his side,

Somewhere on his head there might have been hair at one time,

An ear has exploded and it blossoms like a strange flower at the edge of his cheek.

The others see him,

"God! look at that!" one shouts.

All turn and stare.

The last gift to Mars in a quiet sector, struggles forward, slipping, falling. . . .

Someone starts to help him and is flung away, bloody from the contact.

A new silence falls.

The soldiers' mouths hang open,

They stare like dirty children in the street,

The thing of red goes forward, tripping over empty shells,

He drops finally into a shell hole.

They see him no more.

Then one of them shouts,

Another follows;

THE MACHINE STOPS—NOVEMBER, 1918

They dance, wave their hats, punch each other; crying,
yelling,

The field of honor . . .

Blood finds voice . . .

Hours later a little knot of haughty officers find them all
crazy,

Twenty raving maniacs

Dancing around a muddy hole

From which arises the bloated head of a dead man.

COMPENSATION

He was only a dirty private whom the great high chiefs ignore.

But to his wife and his little kids he was a mighty god of war.

LINES

The field of honor?
Who can tell
The brave old story of how they fell?

STRAY LINES

The eternal grind of the army
Is almost epic.
There is much rhythm but no melody.

IMPRESSIONS

I

Feathers of fancy
Blown hither and there in a bleak night,
Khaki colored feathers that are children of the wind.

II

Women of cool, white bodies that fill our hours
Before we go,
Remember this . . .
When Death smiles over the trench top
There in that glittering moment,
They recall the glory of your breasts;
The luxury of your hips;
The imperishable languor of your eyes,
The smooth touch of your hands upon their bodies. . . .
A soldier at his death shall look back—everyone—
Upon some moment when a kind lady gave him of her beauty.

III

The old shrivelled beast of a woman stopped me,
"Read this, my boy,"
It was a bit from the Bible
Telling me to forgive sins.
I thought of the bayonet practice when I had been told
That it was either a case of get killed or kill.
I almost laughed in her oily face
As I pictured a bayonet being driven through my eyes
And begging forgiveness. . . .

WOMEN

The soldier in search of his love.
But did one ever know the truth?
The soldiers grow to look upon womenkind
As the satisfier of his love.
To us in the ranks it was like a wound upon our spirits.
Though we knew nothing of it.
In our discussions
In our leaves,
In our thoughts
Woman grew to be the tawdry thing of passion.
Dangling before our eyes like the jewel
In a shop window.
Which a poor man looks upon greedily.
Shake your bones, old rotten moralists.
This is true.

SOLDIER, SOLDIER

**Soldier, soldier, what have you seen?
I have looked on fields once fresh and green
Turned crimson in the burning sun,
Turned crimson before they were bitterly won.**

**Soldier, soldier, what did you learn?
I have gathered fruit that I bled to earn;
I have gathered fruit that was almost rotten. . . .
Now I return, and am half forgotten.**

THE GIFT OF SILENCE

O! gift of silence.
Will the vain tomorrow
Fill me as of old
With jaded promises of treasure ships,
Adventure, hopes and high, swift faith?
Again I have the madness of your lips.
The touch of singing flesh.
Dear God! the gift of silence,
When the soul lies dead and love departs. . . .
How pitifully we play our parts.

The act is over and the music stops.
Yet when the house is closed
The last spectator gone,
We stand there in the darkness,
All alone with memory. . . .
Dear God! the gift of silence. . . .

PICTURES IN GRAY

Saluting, saluting, saluting . . .
The uniforms go by
In twos,
In threes,
In fours.
In countless knots
Until the mass becomes a blur within the eyes.
And arms move automatically with machine-like clicks.
The food piled on the tables.
Lines waiting to gobble it down
Like snakes curled around the buildings.
Brown snakes that dissolve at will into curious shapes.
Gray, rain-swept barracks,
Dust and clamor . . .
At night to waken and hear the sentry's sharp, swift challenge.

The dawn,
The ever present dawn
Pouring like a muddy fluid 'round the camp.
Into every crevice and cranny.

The dawn
Seeping into the eyes like poison.
The trucks grinding here and there,
Continued streams of trucks
With uniforms hanging to the steering gears;
Swearing things that peer out of the dirt-rimmed eyes at
you as they pass.
Motorcycles twisting, in and out,
The increasing volume of traffic.
Raucous horns blowing.

PICTURES IN GRAY

Saluting, saluting, saluting . . .
The clamor of the heart is gone.
And life stands still like a diseased pool
In the everglades. . . .

A LAMENT

Ah: now I know
How life may hurt one so
That every happiness
But crumbles into dust before one's eyes,
Crumbles and dies.

Dear Christ: they are so pitiful
These lonely thousands,
Herded like a lot of sheep,
With toil and pain and lack of sleep,
With naught of sympathy,
Or thanks, or joy at what should be
Each individual liberty.

• "There goes a soldier guy"
A jaded voice is speaking from a porch
As some of us go by.
Surrounded by their families, their friends,
And sleeping in clean, sweet beds.
And we . . .
Oh: well, there goes another uniform
They might have yelled at us.
Then and then, I must remember this,
Some of us die. . . .

DUST

These silent soldiers . . .
The millions, millions, millions of them.
Pouring down these barren streets,
Peeping out of windows,
Singing, swearing, toiling, . . .
Millions, millions.

FURLOUGHS

An hour here, an hour there,
"How is the camp?"
"What is your rank?"
"How often do they grant you leave?"
"Why don't they send you to France?"
And on and on the rich monotony of words and gestures.
A show, perhaps,
A ride in a taxi with some stray girl,
Her perfumed arms around your neck,
Rouged lips against your own,
Her lithe, frail body lying in your arms. . . .

Back to camp
The line of tents.
The non-coms swearing at the drill,
The interminable drill. . . .

Poor uniforms, hustled on by the unseen hands.
What can they care? They are but children of your dreams.
Little it is that makes them happy.
They are yours. . . .

Down in the dust we long for fundamentals, uniforms,
What use have we for fine words or clothes?
We want our women. . . .
We want our liquors, our dances,
Our hours without restriction.
Do not bother us, moralists.
Stop your rotten organizations from following us,
Your filthy leagues for the protection of our morals.

FURLOUGHS

What need have we of morals?
We laugh at you,
We curse you,
We spit at you. . . .

The city streets are crowded with uniforms in twos, threes,
fours,
Searching for pleasure.
What is their pleasure?
The soul shrivels up like a leaf and blows away in the night.
They cheer. . . .
The silence swallows their retreating forms.

THOUGHTS OF A UNIFORM

So this is the end . . . this endless camp.
This muddy, narrow street.
This little room, this faint, small lamp,
The sound of endless feet?

I wonder now that men have laughter,
Beauty and desire . . .
Nothing now and nothing after,
Mere cattle in the mire.

Honor and glory . . . immortal things . . .
But give us something more . . .
They crush us under the feet of kings. . .
What are we fighting for?

SONG

When I see lines of soldiers marching by
I feel my throat catch short and choke—
Why must we waste our flesh? O! let us die,
We checkers in this titan's joke.

My friends—the very ones the darkness swallowed
On swift grey ships—they die. Which one
Of all the murdering gods that each have followed
Conceived this game so ably done?

My friends, my friends, they go in splendid ships
Fed like the coal into a fire . . .
But I recall their laughing eyes, their lips,
Their beauty and their great desire.

Pull up the guns . . . damn all you dirty dogs.
Climb up that trench . . . O! Look, he fell:
They lie around us now like fallen logs . . .
You rotters, move . . . O! go to hell.

RIVERS OF LAUGHTER

Death is in their march . . .
There is the odor of lilies . . .
Against the pale sky
The banners droop
Silently. . .

The boys pass in fours,
Their white faces
Agloom with an agony of ignorance,
Their slim hands gripping the heavy rifles,
Their straight legs moving in precise rhythm.

Columns go by;
Columns of dust-covered boys;
Columns of humans. . .

Beside me a weak-kneed civilian suddenly cheers, throwing
his hat in the air.
The column of uniforms has stirred some secret and insistent
impulse in his pitiful soul.

One face turns from the columns. . .
Christ! It smiles a weary smile,
The civilian claps me on the back,
His ugly, weak countenance bathed in a greasy smile,
"I wish I could go."

I move away.
My uniform is burning into my back
Like a sheet of flame.
I am brought sharply to my senses
By a high officer
Who strides by,

RIVERS OF LAUGHTER

Slapping his puttees with a riding crop.
I clap my heels together.
I salute,
The answer is a frown and quick hand to the brim of his hat.
I move sluggishly on through the mob.

Where is my mind?
I ponder.
I gaze down at myself.
I cannot recognize what I see.
It is not myself who salutes, salutes, salutes, salutes.
I smile wondering, willing to see the point of the joke, but
it seems hard.

I could swear that around me there are rivers of laughter
pouring in mad torrents over unseen rocks.

I could swear that I stand alone
Upon the sharp edges of a cliff,
Gazing into space.

There is a horror in the hour,
A dumb appeal from my soul
Remaining unanswered in all this
Trim uniform.

I can feel the frail hands of my spirit
Letting go of the walls of my flesh;
They slip down the smooth walls of my body,
Disappearing within the deep wells
Around my feet.

I clutch at those dear hands,
We meet for a moment, a dear moment,
And they are gone.

I salute again.
There is a chorus of salutes from the obedient who pass me.
I go on. . . .

Rivers of laughter, Christ! Rivers of laughter.

A LETTER

Dear one, life lays its heavy, brutal hands
Upon the spirit, and in other lands
Men die for us . . . dear men who might have known
New wonders and have lived to earn the touch
Of lovely women. They have given much.
What is there now? Sweet Christ, our splendid trust
Lies trampled underfoot in crimson dust.
I wonder now that song and love and art
Have ever played their vain, unheeded part
When mankind fills the beauty of the sky
With screams of wounded men who cannot die,
With endless cannon roar, with carnal yells,
And turns France into a thousand livid hells . . .
So much has life to pride existence for—
Lust, greed, disease and wounds of war.

Men go for us . . . into the dusk they sweep
Line after line. They shall not know of sleep,
Of easy food, of homely kindness.
Sleep waits for them but sleep of such excess
That men no longer weary of tomorrow.
Food may be theirs . . . food of such withering sorrow
That systems die in spite of souls that fight
In broken bodies through that yelling night.
And kindness? Ah yes, the bayonet
Drawn forth from flesh with both hands wringing wet,
And memories of shrieks that follow after;
The aching back, the idiotic laughter
Of some poor fool left in the mud to die.
Shall we now stand aside and question why?

THE PRIZEFIGHT

*Ropes hitting staring eyes,
Noise crashing against noise,
Throats open—red.
Beating hands.*

Flesh stripped to waists,
Beasts filling two chairs,
Towels waving,
Oily seconds arguing excitedly.
The gong.

Flesh smacking upon flesh.
New blood.
Red noses,
Blue-rimmed eyeballs,
Shuffling feet tangled in the sight.
Heavy hands beating, endlessly beating.

Clinching,
Referee's lowered face like a lynx, watching, self-conscious, arbitrary.
Rounds passing,
Gongs sounding,
Lights blinding,
Weary muscles of the face expanding, contracting,
Twitching lips,
Red faces,
Black howling,
Green yelling. . . .
Swinging, turning, toppling, twisting,
Gray contortions of forms.

THE PRIZEFIGHT

Smack!
Slumpf!
Ropes hitting against staring eyes,
Noise crashing against noise.
Throats open—red.
Beating hands.
Sweat and blood.
Referee swinging dizzily against the air.
Broken clinch.

Monotonous blow upon blow.
Bloody hand smearing blood upon shining
shoulders.
Weariness of vision.

A sudden turn.
Blows upon blows.
Another turn.
The gong!

A LETTER WRITTEN FROM A FORT IN THE GREAT WAR

You'd smile these days if you knew how I clung
To shreds of things—each wire is unstrung
That once I played upon with dreaming ease,
And I who wondered at life's mysteries
Have found the simplest brings me to my knees.
So you might smile and doubtless touch my face
With those cool hands that are so full of grace,
Speaking softly as you often do:
"Forget them 'till this bitter work is through.
One might remember far too much, or think
Too frequently of those upon the brink
Of darkness in a wasted, broken land. . . ."
Thus, smiling, you would lay a slender hand
Upon my mouth, demanding silence . . . yet
How can one think of things and then forget?

There is that room above the lighted street,
I would obey you for our love is sweet
And clinging bodies fill the soul entire,
But here amid these men, all our desire
Is like a dream, another shadow thing
Bought of an hour of remembering.
The bitter cold, the sentries in the night,
The flapping tent, the oil or candle light,
The olive drab, the shining bayonet . . .
Sweet Christ, they never let us fools forget!
So would you smile if you could see me here
On duty with the others, and one glove
Removed that I might write you of my love,
The bared hand nearly frozen . . . would you know
Me wrapped and bound and cloaked and bundled so,
Out here in camp?

A LETTER WRITTEN FROM A FORT

Before, I dared not guess
That I should cling some day to happiness
Somewhat as children hold to broken toys.
Ah! life takes joy in breaking down the poise
That men built up in leisure . . . in the way
That night comes down each evening on the day.

And smiling you would lift your eyes and speak
Such healing things as make the spirit meek
When flooded with a dream that stirs and grips,
And end my doubts by giving me your lips.

Too bitterly, perhaps, these caged and chained
Young soldiers think of battles to be gained
In sacrifice. Their faces harden quick;
Some change in man's good fortune does the trick.

Here as I sit beside the floor, they pass,
A herded host of uniforms, a mass
Of flesh that waits its officers' commands,
A maze of lips and eyes and arms and hands,
Bent down before the driving wind and snow. . . .
Beside that door I watch the columns go
Into the dusk. A bugle sounds; a shout
Is heard and then a single light shines out
Within the barracks; sentries take their posts
And hooded shapes move in the night like ghosts.
So does the darkness cloak our camp like death
Who knows already when each last sweet breath
Shall empty from their lungs in some near hour.
Strange does it seem to live beneath that power
Night and day, imprisoned here behind
These mighty guns. These are the ties that bind
Us in our agony against all pain.
What have we lost, what may we hope to gain?
Week after week the dull machine renews
Its fiendish grip and tightens down the screws.

A LETTER WRITTEN FROM A FORT

That which we dreamed and struggled for lies dead,
A song unsung, and in its place instead
We uniforms have iron discipline,
A laugh that dies behind a feeble grin,
The sentry duty in the bitter cold. . . .
Our hearts are strangled, they are growing old.

Thus, all that you have done for me but means
That one in all this host of grim machines
Knows better than he ever has before
How wealth that comes too late finds us grown poor
Beyond the aid of men and women.

And I who take you to these splendid heights
Have known the darkness of the darkest nights,
Have touched the fringes of the mysteries
That might have brought you broken to your knees.
I feel the touch of you, and through that length
Of space we travel all your flaming strength
Uplifts me like the wonder of a song,
Uplifts me swiftly, leaves me free and strong.
Therefore, I know that I must pay for you,
For every daring thing that we might do.
I do not dread the cost—or any debt—
But woman's kindness makes a man forget
His faith, his dreams, and drown in his desire
Her loveliness, her beauty and her fire.

Have you dared plunge beyond your glorified power,
And spent your madness in a single hour?
You know what life expects, what life demands,
Yet give to me the mercy of your hands.
Miladi, come with me across the skies,
The moment lives that with to-morrow dies.
Be sure that what we find upon our way
The gods do not so freely give away

A LETTER WRITTEN FROM A FORT

That you might pass them by, or lightly toss
Them forth—the coming hour when your loss
Is keenest, when the dusk is near, shall be
Naught but a thin, sharp voice of memory.

THE GREAT LESSON

I have learned the great lesson astounding to each in his turn.
Life is not a thing to turn idly about in one's hands,
To mold like putty,
But something hard as rocks through which one has to force
his way,
Maddened by a dream.

IMPRESSIONS

I sat in the theatre.
The audience grew wild over the two farmers
In the motion pictures
Who came to the city and made silly blunders before the servants.

Suddenly I felt a great disgust.
You cads, I said, secretly all of you adore wealth.
You like superficial things instinctively.
You are all socialists
When you are without money.
Sneaks while you are trying to get away.
Dirty dogs when you get it.
At least the men in the army are not sneaks and dirty dogs.
They are real and true.

TO THE PARLOR POETS OF AMERICA IN MEMORY
OF ALAN SEEGER

Not one of you have done so big a thing,
Nor risked so much one despairing toss,
For how could you have known the bitter loss
That fills the spirit of a broken king?
Have one of you possessed the gift to sing,
Tossed all your hopes away as so much dross,
And like a Christ upon a flaming cross
Looked on beyond the rabble's muttering?

Down in the gutters of the mind he heard
The endless marching of determined men,
The high-flung battle cry, the time-worn word
That stills the burning heartache now as then,
And by a deathless myth the heart was stirred
That hopes to never lift its voice again.

AT PARTING

The end of the world has come,
The very lips of Christ
Are sudden stricken dumb
For all the sacrificed.

And where is beauty now,
And love and man's desire?
Prepare your lover now
For his baptism of fire.

Fold him to your breast,
God be generous with power;
You shall have the rest,
This is her last, swift hour.

Soon shall your hungry soul
Feed on a scarlet lust
While the blinded legions roll
Like serpents through the dust.

So hold your final tryst,
God, be generous, thou . . .
These are their lips. They've kissed!
Oh let them be happy now.

MAJOR RAOUL LUFBERY

Fallen, fallen, mighty eagle,
After eighteen victories.
Buried, buried, mighty eagle,
After eighteen victories.

Slow . . .
They go . . .
The funeral . . .
The heavy pall . . .
Bowed head . . .
The dead . . .
Slow . . .
They go . . .
The funeral . . .
Bowed head . . .
The dead. . . .

Somewhere at home
The papers reach
One's eyes.
The headlines screech
At her their swift surprise
Of glory . . .
The same, old story.

Slow . . .
They go . . .
The funeral. . . .

A brief, grim span
Of golden fame,
But like a man
He won his name

MAJOR RAOUL LUFBERY

For all the years,
And yet her tears
Are not for honor and for those
Who wait the conquest of the foes,
But only for him,
For him!
Oh Christ,
For him,
One of the sacrificed!

Slow . . .
They go . . .
The funeral . . .

THE UNSPEAKABLE

The unspeakable!

Barred from their women, alone with their dreams, apart
from their friends . . .

Who shall blame them, the poor guardhouse weaklings for
practices unspeakable?

Who shall tell of battles in the darkness, solitary confinements
on bread and water?

Shall we know of their insane, the agony of their hearts?

Shall I tell of those morally degraded ones? . . .

Shall I tell of their language, their filth?

The flesh rots on our bones, we soldiers . . . the flesh rots
on our bones and is evil in our nostrils.

GUARDHOUSE!

The sentry paces to and fro,
A few dirty soldiers lounge around the doorway.
A hot afternoon.
Suddenly the silence is split in twain by the cry:
"Corporal of the Guard, two prisoners."
"Advance, two prisoners."
The sentry marches the lounging figures straight up to the
doorway,
Two dirty, weary-looking things that have been broken by
the blind system.
It rushes over one swiftly, the thought, that without a uni-
form a soldier does not exist.
What does a uniform conceal?
Filthy underwear, perhaps,
A broken heart,
A withered spirit . . .
The prisoners slouch forward and disappear into the reeking
interior of the guardhouse,
Again the thought . . .
What practices are countenanced there?
One remembers the incidents of a soldier pouring slime in an-
other soldier's ear . . . the brutal beating of one prisoner
by a crazed man. . . .
The guardhouse,
The prison. . . .

GASSED

A strip of pain across the lips.

Following this the tearing down by minute hands each muscle
of the throat; tearing each slowly to accentuate the pain.

The tongue, looping back, gives sudden jerks, choking off the
air.

The eyes leaping forward in hot agony as though knowing
what would follow,

The lungs filling with the gas in inexorable certitude that
drives one mad and leaves one conscious of madness,

The popping of blood vessels in the brain like tiny fire-
crackers.

The collar gathering about the throat as might a burning
necklace.

The red-hot fingers clutching at the air foolishly . . . almost
funny to one who does not know,

Jumping around upon the earth.

The flagellation of the heart under lashes of pain that sweep
over it regularly.

The gathering of acute misery in unexplored places, then the
rush of fire through the lungs again. . . .

They pick up the rotten flesh after awhile and toss it in a
ditch.

Poor flesh. . . .

COMMANDS

These commands are endless in their monotony.
There is a fatality about the word of a superior that kills the
heart.
Under each command there is a slender sword in a sheath,
Ready to be drawn in an instant.
The whole system is behind the drawing of that sword,
Disobey and a myriad unseen murderers are upon you out
of the darkness.
You obey, clapping your heels together,
You feel the whole army on your back
Like the old man of the sea.

DISCHARGED

The order has come.
Release them: commands the impersonal, far-off, powerful,
despotic War Department.
Send back the numbers, the inhabitants of uniforms,
The blind followers of commands.
We have finished with them.
Before my vision there is the picture of huge warehouses
Packed with millions of khaki blouses and breeches
Each with the memory of its one-time occupant.
It would not surprise me if these uniforms were to rise some
cold morning at the echo of reveille,
To march forth in grim parade,
The empty uniforms flapping in the wind. . . .
At the head of the column the figure of some old
General, rotten with age.
Snarling out his commands like flashes
Of a nasty whip.

* * * * *

Uniforms, uniforms, uniforms that have reduced us to the
dead
Level of the earth,
Brown like the loam,
Impersonal like the soil.

RETURNING UNIFORMS

Shaken and torn they return
To the barren arms of love,
Like lost children
Adopted by strange parents
From institutions.
The familiar corners have grown old,
The drug store has changed hands,
A new face appears at the movie window,
Boys have grown to manhood.
Exotic are the changes to the returning uniform,
He finds himself dissatisfied with his rebirth,
Unhappy in his thoughts;
Disgusted with old visions;
An alien in an alien land.
Committees meet him,
Signs flare up out of innocent windows:
 "Welcome Home."
Old women stop him on the street
Asking endless questions
With toothless mouths.
Wounded ones find it more and more lonely as glory dims;
Democracies having no thankfulness, they soon neglect their
 heroes.
The battlefields become anecdotes,
The monotony of camp life fades.
Old uniforms start writing memoirs,
Youths are absorbed into factories.
Youths marrying and settling down into grooves.
Myths grow from rumors,
The machinery of memory creating dull autobiographies,
Histories waste time in weary searches for the "truth,"
Producing tedious books.

RETURNING UNIFORMS

Museums are built containing specimens of bloody might
And subterfuge.

Christianity hastens to adopt a new war in its defense.

Vile ministers use it as a text,

Emotion that colored the air like poison, dies out,

Perpetuation of ignorance;

Perpetuation of greed and slavery;

Perpetuation of lust and crime;

Perpetuation of destruction of beauty . . .

Death and death and death!

* * * * *

The dust is whirling,

The dancers can be seen moving in quick circles,

Frantic with passion.

Priests pass before high altars of gold and silver,

Swinging censors, chanting hymns of hatred,

Before them kneel the millions of worshippers of color and
sound,

The organs flare up and die in vast echoes,

The kings come forth in grim array,

The old ideals are bolstered up by false standards and desire.

Naked women gyrate lewdly for the kings,

The whole machine may be heard creaking if you listen
closely,

It is getting old.

But the masters are repairing, oiling, and feeding it carefully,

Patching up broken parts, driving the stokers to pile on more
coal with flaming whips and foul curses.

Money is scattered broadcast while the cattle fight for it,

Dust whirling in the distant places

Wherein the dancers twist and turn.

* * * * *

Returning uniforms, do you see all this?

Do you know about it?

The night is upon us,

The stars are here.

God laughs and the ugly mechanism grinds on.

MEMORIES

To-day I am granted the honorable discharge from the same
cold hands that accepted me for enlistment as a back
private in March, 1917;

The same hands that denied my going overseas;
That gave me a number.

The memory comes back of the night I enlisted, Arthur
Wilson and myself, comrades in arms,
For seven years!

A mere strip of paper.

Then they tagged us, labelled us, uniformed us and set us
adrift in the growing brown stream.

Then there comes to me the night of leave . . .

The short, swift spasms of freedom in the arms of women,
in drunken riots, in sodden places,

Here and there a golden moment that only hid in the dark
pools about my feet.

* * * * *

Uniforms, uniforms, flapping grotesquely in my memory
Like washing on a line.

THE WIDE ROAD

(FOR MERLE HERSEY)

FOREWORD

They say I scorn the tender things,
The loveliest faces, the barren hours,
The charm of virtue's maunderings
And toss aside earth's sweetest flowers.
And why do this, they ask?
Why set the spirit to a task?

Out of the silence of years of pain
I am a voice that comes again,
That comes again and yet again
With the stored-up strength of many men,
Generations who shall only be
Seeds that flower for my eternity.

The very songs that I have sung,
The very words choked in my breast,
Shall mean to me one single thing,
One splendid thing, one simple thing . . .
Within man's heart a new unrest.

Then let my deeds be dreams,
And when men battle for the thing that seems
Most hopeless and crowded with despair
God grant that my poor strength will place
me there.

BEFORE THE HOUR OF NOON

PREAMBLE

I

Come Friend, Artist, Creator, too long have you been led
through the sunlight;
Go with me into the dusk of the world, into the shadows;
Grow strong with a faith that is warm, not stagnant with time;
Believe in the horror of life, trust in the brutality of things.
You have been fed upon pretty pictures, religious rot and
human idleness of will.
You weary, I know; you hunger for food that a man might
eat, for things that the strong might desire.
Like thunder I come to you from a clear sky, and with light-
ning flash through the heavens.
Quivering with unrest I unfold the secrets crowded in the
darkness, secrets that die of loneliness,
And you who have been a stranger are no longer so; we have
become brothers of the flesh.
I do not take your hand (it seems too useless) I look into
your eyes for strength, saying, "Have you faith, slave?"
Aye, you have been a slave to a thousand decayed laws, morals
and silly conventions.
Come, rise and throw from your shoulders the chains; grow
lean with reasoning, weary from dreaming.
Walk when you might have ridden, go hungry when you might
have eaten . . . and for all this I am bearing my stag-
nancies.

II

I twist into hideous shapes all that I love in order that I may
see it with eyes of hatred;

BEFORE THE HOUR OF NOON

- I distrust my friends and clasp hands only with darkness and solitude;
I grow accustomed to myself;
I do not wax silly over a flower;
I do not roam in the country and seem content to call things by scientific names; rather, say I, go forth into the city and study the human heart;
I do not tread the highway to get somewhere, I go there to listen;
I do not pluck a rose from the bush and lose myself in its fragrance; I look beyond it and enjoy the hidden passion in a woman's eyes (there lieth all the fragrance of a world of roses),
I do not puff up with glory at the past, or the future; I watch the present and never tire of it;
I do not talk of the innate goodness in humanity, I see too much evil, too much filth about me;
I do not leave the church with a hypocritical smile wrinkling my lips, for I know that around the corner
I may come upon a man beating his horse without mercy;
I do not drive forth the woman who loved too well and who holds the fruit of it to her breast, rather do I wish to embrace her and know more of her;
I do not work to pass laws, nor deliver judgements on those things lying between men . . . I am human;
I do not cut down the fruitless bough from the Tree of Life, I prop it up and give it air and light;
I do not spurn with the foot, nor scorn anything except hypocrites;
I do not trust anything in life, nor believe in anything, nor consort with anything too long . . . my heart is my only friend;
I do not place faith in law, or custom, or religion, or humanity;
I am no believer in a hereafter, or before, or in any form of optimistic outlooks; I want a swinging, courageous pessimism, a faith in self and a soul filled with silence;
I see no reason to trust one's relations, or acquaintances, or rulers . . . are they not forced upon us?

BEFORE THE HOUR OF NOON

I see no reason to have acquaintances;
I am no friend of the poor, or the wealthy . . . I distrust
them . . . they are classes, but I do love the companion-
ship of individuals, companionship of only heart and
mind;
And in all this I gather but one flower from the gardens,
Truth naked and unashamed . . . be true to yourself, be
individual!

III

Create, O you artists, be alive for that one thing and none
other.
Go forth into the highways, trusting none, loving but your
art, battling against favor and tradition.
Wait at the crossways and learn life in the darkest corners.
Love women when your strength is in your hands, not theirs;
love the fire but do not carry it home with you.
Be strong with the strong so that you may know how to be
feeble with the feeble.
Ignore criticism of the intellectuals, seek only inspiration . . .
your work will match your dreams.
Be earnest, be sorrowful, build up from the heart, not from
the brain.
Go forth, Creator, love the beautiful where'er it be; dwell
in solitude and be ready with gifts to surprise the world.
With all thy strength distrust any voice that is soothing;
Sit on the benches in the parks, in the theatres be attentive,
but reserve your enthusiasm and energy for your work.
Have children in passion, have the love of at least one
woman . . . these are but the fingerprints in the sand.
Be calm in the twilight, but always remain ready to grow
tempestuous at a breath.
Never leave off dreaming (it is this that separates you from
the rest of the earth); do not get too close to life or you
are liable to lose the perspective; be distant, have many
enemies, and be in deadly fear of losing the gifts so mys-
teriously given you.
Come with me, Brother, let us go into the darkness.

THE HEIGHTS OF LIFE

I

And who shall tell of inspiration? Who shall make laws to govern so divine a gift?

From the whispering of the winds; the tinkle of water over cool stones, the voices of children at play; the stillness of twilight; the passion in a woman's heart; the roar of the multitude at play or in anger; the calm following death; the flush of dawn; the roar of traffic upon the street; the cry of the new-born child; the breath of earth . . . from these and a hundred manifestations come the wine of inspiration, now pouring like a river madly through the soul, now like a stream trickling down a mountainside, and again shut off completely.

And you, O Creator, shall live, suffer, grow wise and be made to work unendingly all for this . . . it is the main-spring of your existence; no jeweller can replace it; tamper with it and you are lost.

Worship it as you would your God, but let it seek you, for being sought it might utterly disappear.

Lay down everything when it comes and tremble like a child with the joy of it.

Mysterious hands have placed it in yours; cherish it as you would some beautiful memory grown mellow in your heart.

Battle for it, wait in the silence of the night and in the midst of the clangor of cities.

Handle it at times as you would a bubble glittering with light and color, for it might burst.

Give up all that you possess if need be, to own it.

Forsake companionship for its pleasure and hearken not to mankind concerning its mysteries.

THE HEIGHTS OF LIFE

It offers no explanation, demands none, being an elemental force knowing no master.

Remember hourly that you are but its slave to be crushed or made stronger at its lordly will.

Be often fearless with it and play with it as you would with lightning were you some god; it may kill you but you will die with the dream of dreams burning in your heart, too happy to live.

Let it be your mistress, your passionate lover, now spiritual, now fleshly.

Drag it not into byways, nor allow it to consort with hypocrites and unbelievers; it will perish at the friendship of Untruth.

Carry it not with you into churches and other meeting places of the people.

But what it produced in you may be transfused into the music of art and given freely to the world, for indeed all that shall be asked of you is to give freely and request nothing.

Seek not to know from whence it came; it is the bulwark of your strength, the line dividing you from the rest of the earth, and it may fade at the nod of a head.

It may speak from the mouths of youths or old men, old women or young women.

If you have been chosen regard yourself as consecrated to an ideal so much higher than yourself that you must spend a lifetime endeavoring to reach its level; your failure will be a sign of your success.

Only fools think they have succeeded in reaching the end; the creative mind never reaches that point where it can say, "Lo, I have attained success."

THE HEIGHTS OF LIFE

II

Inspiration may lurk in the darkness, it may shine in the sun.
It may hover on the heavy lips of the degraded and fallen, or
transfigure the soul of a king!

It may catch in the throat of an infant, or strengthen the
hand of a warrior.

It may color a landscape, or raise a passion to the dignity of
an historic episode.

It may darken the portal of a dreamer, or enrich the wealthy.

It may come forth arrayed in silks and satins, or it may come
naked or clothed in rags.

It may conceal itself in the shadows, or stride forth un-
daunted.

It may come from the outermost edges of the earth, the least
frequented of lands, the desert or the city. . . .

But it comes only to the chosen even though it linger but a
moment like the touch of a light wind against the cheek.

But ever does it come alone, sweeping like a hurricane
through the hidden channels of the heart though but for
a fleeting second.

It feeds upon silence and the taste of tears, upon lust and
purity; it knows no set hour of coming or departure; it
takes all, demanding entire service, and flees like a song,
leaving only an echo.

Cherish it, O you Creator, God-bequeathed one, dust of the
earth; cherish this gift as you would your life!

LIGHT AND DARKNESS

Heed not the voice of the scholar grown rusty in the library,
nor the scorn of the intellectual, nor the hatred of the
mob because of your disregard for their idiotic conven-
tions.

Go not to the feet of the wise men for wisdom, they speak
through the mists of the ages and dimmed enthusiasm.
Too many perished dreams crumble in their souls.

Linger not at the doorways of institutions and schools for
the one thing you must insist upon is individualism.

Be lonely, be yourself.

Waste not your powers in idle conversation with those in
whom you can have no interest; loiter not in the market
places except to buy.

Pay no attention to the cries of the people and their rulers,
go the way your desires point and remember that the
heart wants only what it can feed upon.

Take not your work to the critics, nor listen to their speeches
from the high places; they would kill your inspiration.

Be ever on your guard against the companionship of those
unable to express themselves; consort only with your
kind and little with them.

Offer only what you create; it will be received without thanks,
nay, often scorned or neglected; the world bites the hand
that feeds it. Be content, therefore, only with creating
and have no hope of reward.

Beware of a friend's praise or criticism, it is like a woman's
smile . . . it may weaken you.

Reserve your best thought for future work, let nothing go
forth that has not been studied from every angle.

For every critical word against you will be found one in your
favor even though it comes from the ends of the earth.

LIGHT AND DARKNESS

Your work, small in the scale of things as it may seem, is like a pebble dropped in the quiet pool of life; its effects will be felt at the outermost edges.

If your work is sincere and a production of inspiration, no ill-will nor neglect can destroy it.

All that you produce is permanent . . . once given to the world, all the cries, all the sneers, and the thunderstorms of a maddened crowd cannot touch it.

Beware of standards, creeds and customs, they are the executioners of art.

THE RIPENING FRUIT

I

Rest content with certain ideas and their strength and expansion.

Ideas we love, we frequent.

Spurn absolutely any attempt at reasoning over ideals; let your inspiration decide. Trust in it when everything else fails you.

Be much alone with your ideas, think upon them, but remember always that you have little time to waste; you are the chosen one, the servant of a vast force, yet you must reason and be confident.

Be afraid of the ideas going to seed in the multitude and in the hearts of the intellectuals.

II

You are the law giver, the bringer of dreams to a starving world that knows it not.

You are the freshener of streams, the thorn in the flesh, the unrest in men's hearts.

Your ideas should be all-comprehending, disdaining compromise and fresh from the companionship of the gods.

You are of the true aristocracy, the aristocracy of mind.

In you center a thousand whirlpools of desire and you must never rest content; in calmness you will find the fruits of death grown easy to eat. Seek the battle and carry the standard.

If you grow weary of yourself it is a sign you are in need of rest, not content.

Return often to the hills and dream and grow inspired.

In the cities become lean with thought and work.

Forget the flesh, it is only a cloak thrown hurriedly over the soul.

THE RIPENING FRUIT

Talk with others who believe as you do, listen to them and go away dissatisfied.

Grow hungry for your ideals and pass sleepless nights in contemplation upon them.

Be your own teacher, your own maker of philosophies, for you are growing in a great solitude, a vast desert that will turn into a garden at your magic touch. Be afraid of what you teach yourself.

Be fearless with the carrying out of your thought; go hence with it and dump it into the market place when it is done.

But be lonely!

KNOWLEDGE AND BELIEF

Believe in nothing created by man, in nothing but yourself.
Have no fear of the world, be the master of your dreams and
have limitless faith in your powers. Remember, O
creator, you are the chosen one and as such must sit
apart and grow wise in your loneliness.

Have faith in beauty, drink of it and become drunk with its
splendor.

Distrust the faith of mankind in things unseen, believe in
only what you touch with your hands.

Go forth confident and remain ever so, knowing that you
are beyond man.

All obstacles placed in your way are but the signs of your
coming glory, the signs of a timid community that dreads
your power.

Have faith in your inspiration, your work. Pause not a
moment to consider the reception of your efforts, con-
sider only the production.

Why do you have these dreams, these moments of delirious
madness and intoxicating inspiration, this endless desire
to express yourself, unless it be for good?

Have faith in yourself beyond everything else . . . there have
been those having faith and no inspiration, those having
inspiration and no faith; both bled to death. You must
be both to be an artist, a creator.

You are a creator if you love things for themselves. You
are the mother of dream children.

Go forth, Dreamer, quivering with desire.

THROUGH THE DESERT

O youth listening at the gateways of life, vibrant with emotion ;

To you, O ripened fruit fallen from the trees and in danger of rotting on the earth ;

To you, O believer in the stars and sunshine, love and friendship ;

To you, O truster of yourself ;

Cast from your doorway the thought of patriotism to dead ideals, to governments decaying in the high places.

Smile to yourselves at the proverbs brought down to you on silver platters ; scorn the stories of the wise men who sit like running sores in the market places. They speak only echoes.

Why should we sacrifice our youth before the glassy stare of moldering idols ?

Distrust the incense of life and sly smiles of your friends.

Be brutal to the pure idealist as well as the materialist in any form.

We are through with the idea of service and ignorance ; in its place we have raised the dream of individualism, every man for himself, an expansion of spirit.

Be patient and go the way of the creator, for the wise, as well as the ignorant, will sneer at you and call you a fool, a coward, a craven.

Turn on them suddenly if you must and you will see their souls shrink like burning paper in their eyes at the word "Duty."

The multitude expect their masters to do all their thinking for them and will stone you for doing so.

Take heed, O Artist, they will bleed you upon an altar drenched with blood and mayhap erect a cold marble shaft to your memory, colder than their affection, forgotten as soon as a passing shower.

THROUGH THE DESERT

Beware of smiles and sneers, see how easily one merges into
the other.

The same mouth laughing with you today may utter the com-
mand for your death tomorrow.

Be free henceforth.

Be lonely!

THE AWAKENING

Above all things be willing to be swept off your feet; throw your whole soul into each individual effort.

Contemplation is the food that you must feed on most; action may kill one's dreams.

Go into the hills and listen; go into the streets and listen . . . from the silence as well as the tumult will come your message.

Never apologize.

Speak to-day those truths clamoring in your heart for utterance; speak them as you are inspired, and on the following day the truths on your lips with the same force even though they contradict those of to-day.

You are an artist, not a critic . . . it is your duty to obey your nature and leave the criticism to the ages.

The years are the best critics . . . what is best will live, what is less than that will surely die.

Be careful in lifting love and friendship from the flesh to the spirit lest you weaken their force. Again I caution you to distrust the loved one, the friend; look them in the eye.

Walk the streets in silence and distrust the conversation of men.

Have the better part of your nature concealed in the shadows, with only one side for the world. Be not communicative.

Your eternal longing to express yourself is a guarantee that you are among the chosen. . . . Inspiration warns the dreamer of her coming by covering his path with thorns and intoxicating him with the fragrance of eternal life.

Lest you stumble keep your eyes on the stars.

Praise is more dangerous than criticism; shun it as you would comfort.

Regard not the way of a master dreamer, think only of your way, for you are the master.

THE AWAKENING

Weaken not your powers through useless and long-drawn out attempts; reserve your strength for the great work.

Keep ceaselessly at your art, however, and let no hour pass without some thought about it.

Be impatient and anxious to go ahead; the patient will is the possession of the dolt or the scholar.

And above all beware of intellectuality.

Distrust the serenity of time, it may close down upon you at any moment like a clap of thunder out of a clear sky.

THE PSALM OF DEATH

When you shall own in your heart of hearts that you are no longer able to care for romance and learning, and are putting a stop to your work to eat of the fat of the land;

When you shall say to yourself: "I must do as the multitude and the intellectuals do, I must obey custom;"

When you confess shamefacedly to your inner visions and laugh at your dreams;

When you grow weary of the love of production, the lust for creation . . .

Then shall die the Artist in you, then perish miserably the flowers of art sprung to life within your mind, the roses of thought and lilies of inspiration, as they have already done in the minds of a myriad others.

THE CUP OF LIFE

(FOR PERLEY POORE SHEEHAN)

FOUR PAGES FROM THE DIARY OF A MURDERER'S WIFE

I

We sit at dusk by the window,
Hand in hand.
Worshipping the protection of the night.
Bill pulls me to his great breast in a burst of passion;
I'll throw my head back giving him my lips
While he crushes me to him in huge bear hugs.

He'll run his hands softly over my thighs and breasts.
For the big fellow he is.
How gently, how patiently, he kisses my fingertips,
And my eyes when they are tired.

Some day the coppers are coming for him, so he says.
"They'll send me to the chair surer than hell."
I cuddle up to him, frightened to death,
While we both look out of the window at the passing "L"
trains.

II

Ah, you respectables, who edge away from him in the subway,
Because of his rough appearance,
Cauliflower ears,
Red nose—
What do you know about him?
I almost laugh when I think what you would do if you found
he had really killed someone,
Robbed safes all his life,
And lived with an immense price on his head.

THE DIARY OF A MURDERER'S WIFE

But he isn't afraid of you.
He hates you for a lot of sneaking dogs who cry when they
are struck,
Going around with your tails between your legs,
Muttering and mumbling and afraid.
He stands out against all of society. . . .
He preys on you and fights his battles alone.
He's about the only real man I've ever met.
When we go down the street I love to trot along beside him,
My head bobbing down level with his shoulders.
Hands that could crush me like a straw.
Then at dusk . . .
He appreciates everything that I do for him.
The food always tastes right,
Our tiny apartment always looks nice to him.
Never a day passes but what he remembers me in some way,
bringing home a flower or a box of candy, or some
trinket he purchased just for me.

III

When he goes away I am half delirious with fear until he
returns.
Day after day it is so.
The touch of his hand lingers with me like the refrain of a
well-beloved song.
To think of loving a man with courage enough to kill.
All my life I was trained and groomed to marry some re-
spectable.
Thank God I found him in time.
Now, perhaps they'll come along and take him away.
Dear God, we to be separated,
We who have carried love to the borderlands of beauty, pas-
sion to something beyond poetical expression.
They might get him some night, when we are asleep.
He might never return. . . .

THE DIARY OF A MURDERER'S WIFE

IV

Something terrible has happened. . . .

The other night he passed a mission and stopped a moment to hear the sermon.

I hate preachers.

He talked about "forgiveness of sins," "taking religion."

Bill returned in a penitent mood.

His great hands hanging limply at his sides . . . hands that have crushed me with passion.

By the window he sits while I am preparing the meal.

Then he bursts into a flood of remorseful language,

Swearing he is going to reform.

My white lips ought to have told him the truth, but he went on.

I said nothing because I thought it would blow over in a day or so.

He came home a week later and told me he had taken a position as a clerk;

Intended becoming "honest."

Now he comes home every night tired out and reads his paper during dinner.

And afterwards sits around in his stocking feet.

I am learning to hate him.

To-day I caught the eye of a man across the hall.

Bill once told me about him.

He is a well-known gambler and thief.

They say he killed a woman once because she made him jealous.

He's big and strong.

I think I'll tell the police about Bill. . . .

He ought to be electrocuted. . . .

And then I'll go across the hall some evening with an invitation in my eyes.

THE CHRISTENING

I

The anointed of God lifts the brawling, puking infant in his
arms,
Mumbling what might be termed apologies for its miserable-
ness, its human qualities;
Sprinkling "holy water" on it.
The poor mother stands aside.
Her piteous eyes, like a sheep's, blinking with tears.
Her breasts molded with fresh milk.
Already she is healing and preparing herself for new chil-
dren, like a spiritless machine.
Half conscious,
Half unconscious of what she is doing.

The father tries to smile.
That weak fleshling is figuring the cost;
Wondering how to prevent another arrival;
Perplexed at his wife's loss of beauty,
Her preoccupation,
Her forgetfulness of sex.
A few relatives hang around like crows on a dead tree;
Clinging to their "moral" ideas;
Giving lip service to their gods;
But practising hypocrisy in secret.

II

The anointed of God,
Heavy eyed and greasy with overfeeding,
Waddling under clerical robes, not unlike a courtesan's and
therefore attractive
Even around his chalky bones;

THE CHRISTENING

Hands back the yelling infant with a secret feeling of relief,
A circus grin trickling down the corners of a sensual mouth.
A grin termed a "smile" . . .
Cultivated for doting mothers.
The child has wet itself and the mother is visibly embarrassed,
Especially as it stained the robe of the anointed.
The name has been given and the ceremony completed.
A number would have done just as well,
A number of zeros,
A sign,
A sound,
For it is only the seal on rotten fruit;
The trademark of a new commodity to be sold, exchanged and
lost.

III

The party leaves the sacred edifice.
At home there is much rejoicing.
The relatives sit and eat, taking mental stock of the parents
and the home.
Gathering material for criticism later on.

That night the mother and father figure out how to make
his salary pay the various bills,
Determining never to have any more children.
The baby finally drops into a sound sleep.
They are alone.
A nearby neighbor plays "Hearts and Flowers" . . .
A favorite of theirs.
He remembers that she played it the first evening they met.
He draws her into his arms,
Taking the dish-scarred hand in his and kissing her tired
eyes.
The spark of a dying passion flames up in their hearts. . . .
They forget everything in the wonder of sex. . . .

THE ROLLING STONES

Heed ye, the rollers, the magnificently restless.
Preached to and warned in your youth
By sweaty, dirty-mouthed old fathers whose tobacco juice
dribbled in their beards;
Cautioned by barrel-like women
To beware of "the rolling stone that gathers no moss."
Go forth . . . gather no moss . . . you are not a reindeer.
Return with the salt air of the sea in your nostrils,
The winds of Asia blowing in your hair.
The touch of women's hands on yours from far Araby and
Egypt,
The fruits eaten as you found them
When they were ripe. . . .
Return then, Oh, anointed of the flesh
For you will be able to laugh in pitiless derision at the
snouts
Who stayed at home,
Content with the exhausted sex of one woman,
The exhausted spirit of one town,
One set of friends,
One set of ideas;
All of them melted in a crucible of vain endeavor,
Tawdry, bankrupt of emotions, diseased with moralism.

And you!
Oh winged rolling stone!
You have touched the lips of veiled women in Constanti-
nople,
Heard wise men speak in distant lands,
Breathed deeply of life . . .
And though you may never sing of it all with your tongue-
less mouth;
Being no singer, poor fool, even you cannot express beauty,
But you can live it.

THE MORALISTS

Oh, great are the powers and faith of the moralists.
They are able to do battle for beliefs, to starve, to toil, to
pray.
They are strong in numbers and in muscle.
And they fight among themselves, killing one another.
Oh, wise are the provisions of nature.
Providing with one stroke the desire to kill and the power
to kill.
Thus is the world saved for beauty.

THE MARRIAGE

The little church shrouded in ivy and standing penitent beneath the oak trees,
Throbs with the organ notes that fill its accustomed silence with maddening echoes.
The doors stand open.
A curious crowd scatters here and there along the sidewalk, on the lawn and part way in the vestibule.
The "invited" are within, sitting comfortably, but on the alert.
Before the simple altar stands the minister in glittering white and black.
His wizened face glowing foolishly.
One hand is upraised and the last words of the immortal ceremony are being said.
Ponderously, slowly, emphatically . . .
The official seal that custom places on those innocents who stand there a moment awestruck.
The woman, flushing red under her veil, half crazed with worry and half unconscious,
Gathers her wits together as they kiss and receive the customary congratulations.
Life has virtually ended for her so far as it concerns what has led up to the ceremony.
Groomed, trained, repressed, guarded, scolded, petted . . .
The clumsy hands of society have molded her and she has acquiesced.
The man, a little nervous, but more wary than nervous,
Wonders at the expense of the new life, the inevitableness of it all, the pleasure of claiming her body.
It all jumbles in a sort of Aladdin-like color,
A mixture of lights, faces, noises, music, shuffling feet, curious glances, odd words, laughter of friends. . . .

THE MARRIAGE

He takes her arm and they walk down the aisle, reaching their carriage after a perfect hailstorm of rice and shoes.

Within she shrinks into his arms, timidly. . . .

It is all so different now.

Their previous meetings had been illusory, capable of instant separation . . . instant surrender. . . .

But this moment the prison-like elements are paramount, and she is half afraid. . . .

Of what she hardly knows.

She has been told what marriage is,

Yet like all stories repeated by the more experienced,

Its grimness loses in the telling and it seemed more like a fairy tale.

She has had no inkling of how society works.

She has no imagination and therefore her only thoughts are of unnamed fears, uncatalogued desires, disjointed beliefs, few requirements.

He is much the same except that he is "wise" in a so-called worldly fashion.

He imagines that he knows women because one or two of them have carelessly given themselves to him,

Gifts that were as little value to them as to him.

He had been drunk a few times, gambled and he "travelled" with the usual crowd of "corner sports."

He remembered now how they had twitted him as to his coming marriage, with sly winks and grotesque gestures.

She fluttered a little in his arms at this moment and a jolt of the carriage threw them closely together.

Simply she lifts her eyes to his, half questioning.

How beautiful it seems, all of a sudden.

How strange, how new,

One of her hands steals into his and face against face they look out of the window at the traffic,

Utterly apart.

"Sweetheart," he murmurs, "We love each other, don't we?"

For answer she snuggles close to him,

Her breasts against his own, her entire body pressed to his.

THE MARRIAGE

His lips find hers and mouth against mouth they forget
everything until the cab stops at the wharf.

They are going to Bermuda for two weeks.

Aboard the boat and in their cabin he pulls her to him again.

A strand of her hair blows against his eyes.

Her cool fingers touch his.

Like frightened children they stand there for a moment.

Suddenly he crushes her to him in a surge of passion.

For a moment she wilts and comes to herself to find that he
has laid her in the berth and is kissing her eyes, her lips,
her hands.

She leaps to her feet, aghast, terribly afraid,

Again he surges at her and she battles foolishly for a second.

Then she succumbs.

In the morning she awakens first.

He is sleeping soundly, one hand thrown over his face,

A typical position she is to know through the coming years.

For a moment she looks at him, puzzled.

Then she remembers and trembles.

Still he sleeps.

She gets out of bed and going to the mirror performs a hurried toilet,

Winding her lovely hair attractively around her head,

Then quietly she returns to the berth,

Snuggles close to him, saying:

"Wake up, dearie," and adding in a whisper, "I have just
opened my eyes."

THE CHURCH

I

The great building loomed up in the twilight like a monstrous spirit.

The rose window glistened as a jewel on a woman's breast,
The glory of the structure awed one by its coldness and dignity.

Across the street was a little shack leaning to one side.
The door opened and a sodden beast slunk into the half-darkness;

Filthy and silent.

And as he passed the church he crossed himself.

II

This is the minister!

His well-kept hands are folded,

His righteous eyes glance heavenward,

And a sickly smile trickles down the corners of his lustful,
weak mouth.

See him as he trips daintily along the street,

Blushing because a woman's skirt was blown back by the
wind,

His head so high in the air that he almost stumbles over a
little newsboy.

III

How I would like to have one of these ministers tied hand
and foot to a post with the head pinned back

Exposing the full throat.

How gleefully, how carefully I would run a sharp knife
from ear to ear;

As the wound widened I should study the lights dying in his
eyes. . . .

There is too much flesh in an overly-crowded world.

THE CHURCH

IV

The bishop comes.
His long, white robe trails upon the carpet spread for him
to walk from the coach to the doorstep.
The crowd kneel and dare not smile.
But all I can see is a fat scamp bedecked like a courtesan
and with heavy paunches under his eyes.
Someone spoke of the heavenly look on his face.
I wonder if he was thinking of the last mistress or the next.

V

The funeral is in mid-progress.
The minister kneels to pray for the soul once in the already
rotting flesh before him.
His lips move, but we catch no word.
A woman sighs and whispers to a neighbor about the beauties
of faith.
It was a good thing she couldn't hear what he really said.
He was swearing under his breath because he hadn't had time
to get his dinner.

VI

With bowed head she kneels, praying.
The light in the church is so soft, so faint, that she seems to
disappear entirely at times,
Melting strangely into the shadows.
It seems to me that this is the spirit of religion . . .
A woman praying . . .
Now dimmed from the eyes in encircling darkness,
Again silhouetted sharply before our eyes.

THE CHURCH

VII

The fat old priest smiled and joined the crowd of youths
standing on the corner.
Their laughter paused a moment and they appeared con-
strained.
But a second later were laughing again.
Fully at ease in the presence of a shrewd student of human
nature.

VIII

Between her sobs she managed to pour forth her confession.
The kindly father listened, gave her some advice and blessed
her.
The weight was lifted from her shoulders.
She had told someone.
Radiantly happy, she felt as though she were walking on the
stars.

IX

God made the flowers grow,
But He also empties the slops.

X

It is after choir rehearsal.
The "socially select" in the congregation have been singing
for the sake of Jesus.
The minister waits until all but one young woman have left
the church.
She stands in the doorway as he puts out the lights.
The girl feels the arm of the minister encircling her.
At that moment the mother is sitting by the table at home,
sewing, contented and glad that her daughter attends
church so regularly.
The daughter trembles, giving him the full service of her
lips,
Flushing with the pleasure of newly awakened desire.

THE CHURCH

XI

After all some of these ministers excite in me a certain
jealousy. . . .

They seem so sure of everything,
While I am sure of nothing,
Least of all myself.

XII

The minister stood rubbing his sleek hands,
Nodding his head at the crowd
That poured from their autos and wagons into his red-brick
church.

I passed down the lane a few minutes later
And the night was filled with their songs.
As I came out on the main road
I found a dog dying in agony.
It had been struck by one of the worshippers
Who was afraid of being late
At the services.

SILHOUETTES OF THE COUNTRY

(FOR BYRON BOX)

SILENCE

They stand around the weird, black box that holds the dead,
His wife, two little children, one or two friends,
Now and then the quick catch of the wife's breath, breaking
on the stillness like a dagger thrust.
The children find their mother's hands, looking on, puzzled.
The smallest seeks a corner of her sleeve.
The older buries her face in the mother's dress, bursting into
tears,
Begging to be taken away.
They leave with clumsy efforts to do so quickly.
"He was a fine fellow," one of the friends remarks as he
gets his hat preparatory to going.
The wife thanks him with her eyes,
Struggling with a vast emotion.
The house becomes silent again.
Now the children plead for their dinner.
Almost frightened at the sacrilege she goes into the kitchen
for some cold meat.
Only the day before he stood there cursing her for a late
meal,
His brutal face beaming like a red apple.
How he had torn her with his insults time and again!
"But I must forget that now," she mumbles to herself dis-
tractedly.
The children are fed, and put to bed, the friend who re-
mained in the meanwhile sitting near the coffin in the
"front" room,
The mother comes in after a time and they sit together pa-
tiently, hand in hand.
And then comes to her mind the moment of his death.

SILENCE

It was near midnight and he had reached out a filthy hand—
The motion that was so distinctive of him after a drunken
rout.

Instinctively she shrank as from the touch.

Then she saw his face again . . .

The red apple. . . .

It had been pressed against hers,

The rough beard cutting into her flesh like a thousand
needles.

His arms folded her like a beast.

For the first time in their life together she resisted,

Half sobbing to herself.

He swore instinctively, but she jumped from the bed and ran
across the floor and out into the hall.

The thunder of his coming followed her.

She had just time to step aside as he toppled headlong into
the darkness of the kitchen stairs.

They found him crumpled like a dirty rag an hour later.

She was surprised at the ease with which she glibly described
his going for a drink of water.

The fall and then . . .

She sighed.

The friend took her hand murmuring,

"You poor dear, how it must hurt to lose him."

And together the two women sat looking at the coffin.

AT THE CROSSROADS

I

Three old women standing by the road,
Seeing me and talking among themselves.
Miserable old sexless creatures,
Exhausted of passion,
Dried up with gossip.
Their hair combed back over unthinking heads.
Their dresses falling from shrivelled breasts
In unemotional lines.

II

Three dark, dirty little saloons.
Cadaverous citizens drooping around the doorways in the
evening.
A glimpse of a ragged child,
A child-heavy mother,
A nasty dog. . . .
To-day I heard one rhapsodize about the beauties of the
country.
And yet I have seen
A spider and a solitary wasp in a death struggle
On a beautiful day;
Flies skimmed from the proverbial "fresh" milk;
A child beaten unmercifully by the famous "kindly old
father;"
Open sewers by the road;
Battered barns;
Fire-swept houses;
Little settlements so vile that the imagination became dull
at the recital of murders and crimes unspeakable;
All this in the beautiful country
That has been sung of by Riley like an innocent girl's eyes.
Who shall sing of her when she has been covered with kisses?

ROMANCE

I passed the house
And stopped thrilled at this sign:

TRA SMANS EN RANC

Words that might have been inscribed by some dead hand
On a crumbling ruin in ancient France. . . .
How terrible was it to learn that the words only spelt
"Tradesman's Entrance,"
With some of the letters missing.

THE CHILDREN

The children were playing hide-and-seek
By the path.
I happened to look at one of them,
Plump and red-faced she was,
With that glance of ignorance and affectation that would
 cling to her
All her days,
Like the odor around old furniture.
Already she knew everything she would ever know,
Or understand. . . .

AT DUSK

The man stumbled from the doorway,
Putting his hat on clumsily.
The face of a fat woman appeared behind him,
Smiling in a contented sort of way. . . .
Had she no memories that were like hot flames in the darkness?
And had he no thought of beauty as he came forth from the
dripping thighs of love?

The whole countryside was interested in the affair,
Making continuous fun of the husband who came home
regularly on the 7.02 each night,
Unsuspecting what went on during the day.

Three ignorants,
Each missing the important things in life.

THE SECRET STORY

"You should have met Mr. Myers,"
The old caretaker said.
"He died last year.
He would have left my daughter a lot of money hadn't his
sister been so selfish.
Why, he had bundles did up marked 'Tillie' what he often
told us about.
Year after year he used to come here with his camera.
He took lovely pictures.
George go get that album.
He took a fancy onto us kind of touching,
Especially in such an old bachelor.
When George married Tillie he was away.
But I wrote him and he sent her the most beautiful set of
dishes,
All scalloped, with flowers.
Must have cost fifty dollars, at least.
He came next summer and took these pictures.
That's the one, George, give it to the gentleman.
That's the house from the front . . . the family spent a lot
of money on it a hundred years back.
Afore I come to be caretaker the last of them was put out.
Who owns it now?
Why, a Jew that lent the sisters lots of money.
They live across that hill.
They come here very seldom,
The youngest cried so the last time she came.

"This picture is of Tillie down in the cellar making out she's
a prisoner.
Mr. Myers made her let her hair down.
He thought it was lovely.

THE SECRET STORY

"I don't know how he took it in that dark room.
These were taken on the stairs and in different spots.
He was a most wonderful picture taker."

As old Mrs. Mason ground on I saw the whole story
Like a picture, behind her blurred sentences.
Myers loved the daughter with all the fervor of a broken
spirit.

Nice old gentleman, well preserved, wealthy.
Perhaps he had thought of marriage and been timid.
And then she married this whippersnapper—this shaken thing
of clumsy hands—George!

And these pictures;
How he must have delighted in taking them with her hair
falling about her shoulders,
Her lighted face raised to his.
If he had been a painter he would have immortalized her,
But had he been a great painter there would have been other
things he could not picture.

Their eyes may have met for a hundredth part of a second
on rare occasions . . . he hitting the camera suddenly in
self-conscious way.

Sweet Christ, how it must have hurt him.
As I looked upon her sitting there by the window,
Silent,
Toying with her delicate fingers,
I wondered about them more and more.
She was lovely,
With a piquant illusiveness that draws the flesh out by the
roots.

Could he have been a moralist and left her as he found her?
Or did he gather up her departing courage
And lift her to his lips
Like an aroused god who stirs from a sleep of a thousand
centuries?

THE SECRET STORY

If a stray wisp of her hair blew against his mouth how it
must have tantalized him,
Driven him like a beast in a tempest of suppressed passion
That might have withered before a Puritanical conscience.

Old Mrs. Mason went mumbling on.

Tillie sat silent in the window, looking out on the river.

George put the album back in the drawer with a banging
noise.

I pondered over the relationship of one conscience to five
senses.

"IN THE SPRING A YOUNG MAN'S FANCY"

Now that you ask me,
Knudson was kind o' peculiar.

Down here in the valley we have queer things happening now
and then.

The thing that started it I believe, was the contrast—

She—small and willowy like,

He—bulky, loud-mouthed and selfish.

With a way of hitching up his shoulder

And bellowing that set my nerves on edge

Like a fellow blowing through a piece of tissue paper

On a fine tooth comb;

His huge head surmounted by a roaring flame

Of red hair.

His hands—they kept twitching, twitching, like as though he
was thinking of something.

He'd sit in the kitchen while Carrie pared the potatoes,

I was working for 'em then and I didn't like his way—

Did you ever go into a room filled with people

Realizing that something had been said about you just before
you entered?

Well, that's the way I felt.

He was never impolite—not exactly that—

He only rolled his eyes at you and twitched his fingers.

When we had to get another hand he took on Fred—

Yes, he's the one—

He was fat and when he worked hard

He would turn red and sweat like a squeezed sponge.

But he was a good worker and didn't shirk none.

I'm not sure . . . it seems to me it was 'long about spring

When Fred began mooning a bit,

Refusing to talk or be the least bit sociable.

"IN THE SPRING A YOUNG MAN'S FANCY"

He used to eat in the kitchen.
Carrie hung around the stove in the steam
And would come parading up to the table with a great pan
of hot biscuits—
She's a good cook—always was—
Saying nothing at all hardly, just like Fred.
Knudson he twisted his big hands all the time,
Looking sleepy-eyed. . . .
But once I caught him smiling when Fred stooped over
To do some little favor for Carrie—
His fat face turned red and he certainly looked silly
Down on his knees there picking up the overturned peas.
I was suspicious then—I kept my eyes open you bet.
One day in the field Fred blurted it all out—
I felt sorry for him but I told him to leave
And not to bother Carrie any longer.
Fred wiped his nose with his old bandanna, saying,
"I could kill the dog . . . I came yesterday evening with the
milk . . .
He was a-holding Carrie in his lap with one of those dirty
hands of his
On her leg . . . when he saw me he laughed out loud,
Kissing her smack on the mouth just as though I wasn't
there. . . .
Of course she's his wife, but he did it to make me jealous. . . .
He's a damn selfish dog. . . . I've a good mind . . ."

Poor Fred he was clean wild,
I tried to get him to go away—
He would hang around though . . .
The rest you know. . . .
Knudson got him one day right on the head
With a rake. . . .
They had to pull the teeth out he drove 'em in so far.
They let Knudson off because he simply told the jury
As how he found Fred kissing a little strand of her hair
That he kept in the back of his watch—not enough to clear
a man for murder.

"IN THE SPRING A YOUNG MAN'S FANCY"

I don't know why Fred admitted it to him;
No one knew what they really said to each other.

Yes, that's why I don't take much stock in you city poets
Who write about the fine country and all that stuff.
It appears to me that such fellows as Riley and Tarleton
Ought to be strung up for doin' so much prevaricatin'. . . .
You say they're dead. . . .
They ought to be.

LOOSE LEAVES

(FOR HENRY LEVERAGE)

THE GREAT SYMPHONY

I

The avenue is blocked with the black crowds.
The police stand here and there attempting to control them.
The sun blazes down out of a clear sky.
Line after line of union men march by . . . sweeping lines
that pour up the street and disappear . . .
Banners, hats, color, music, the beating of drums, the heat,
the excitement.

II

And I am saddened by this exhibition of machinery . . . this
blind assembly of souls under the stern leadership of
their leaders . . . our leaders . . . our masters.
I look upon this raw material, these strange, foreign faces
lighted by the dying flames of hope. . . .
I see them and what will come of this great republic born
out of grief and sacrifice. . . .
I listen to the stirring music of the passing bands and the
tears start to my eyes. . . .
My heart throbs with the endless procession; I feel kin to
them, I understand them.
There is an old man attempting to keep up with his fellows;
There is a young upstart bearing his banner proudly;
There is a middle-aged business man in high hat; a line of
mere youths; a slight chap in tweeds . . . all under the
hands of power, helpless children of circumstance.

THE GREAT SYMPHONY

III

Still the swaying lines sweep by.

I grow tired watching them, I am frightened at the great strength typified in this throng . . . I am filled with marvellous sympathy for them and yet my heart cries for a dreamer,

One who will mould and control this shapeless mass to the will that burns in him.

And I know that I, too, shall follow him, glad that we have such might in a single mind, such power in a solitary spirit.

Oh leader, you are wanted.

IV

When the sun goes down they are still marching . . . when the stars rise they are still marching . . .

Through all the days I see them marching . . . one tremendous stream pouring down the street.

A great symphony of human flesh!

TO ———

I

Like a candle gutted in the darkness you suddenly went out
of my life awhile.

I was standing in a great cathedral
Listening to the sweetest music of life
Suddenly realizing that it had ceased,
That I stood in a dead silence amid the shadows.

II

The touch of a hand;
The caress of a loved one's eyes;
The whisper of supreme passion;
The fragrance of a haunted garden of flowers;
Then a night of memories.

III

Amid the ebb and flow of life,
Among the huge machinery of things,
In the dust of the city . . .
One home, one heart, one thought, one place to return to and
be comforted.

IV

In the woods listening to the soft notes of a lonely bird
Off in the forest depths . . .
The passing of that music into the heart;
A great silence without, a world of beauty within.

V

Dusk and thoughts of love!

OUR HELEN

Helen of Troy has been Helen to us all,
The Helen of Homer, of Goethe, of Marlowe,
No less than the Helen of a laborer who wipes his oily hands
upon his sleeve,
The Helen of a dry goods' clerk.

SEX

The strength of a man is never tested until he has known
passionate love.
He may build cities,
Erect kingdoms,
Be master of men and ruler of wide lands,
But one innocent-looking woman,
Slender, dark-eyed and of whispering tongue,
Can wrap him like a withered flower around her smallest
finger.

THE PUBLIC LIBRARY

Long marble halls.

Large offices awry with desks.

Women like huge harpies clinging to the files that line the
walls,

Sexless things that function as a jelly fish might in the stag-
nant air.

There is a whispering of gossip,

Soft footsteps of male attendants (women in disguise).

This is the edge of the world of thought, the cliff overhanging
superstition,

These automatons dare to suppress books, to even regulate
the thought of those who are out in the market places
doing the work of the world.

Given a great trust they twist it into hideous shape, either
helping to hound a Poe or a Shelly to his death, or biting
at the shanks of the giants like gnats.

A great mausoleum of rattling bones.

Oh! for some fool anarchist with a bomb!

TO MY LOVE WITH SOME VERSES

I've brought my flowers to you
The fairest plucked from the garden of dreams,
But they wither. . . .
See, even as I hand them to you in the glare of day
They wither moodily and drop away.
Think, Love, I plucked them when they swung their fragile
heads
To and fro in some neglected corner of the garden.
They were almost smothered by the weeds,
Near choked with stagnant air.
Yet had they grown and I have plucked them.
Take them as you would a handful of stars from the open
hands of God.
Withered as they seem, near you they will waken to life;
Pinned to your bodice they will absorb your love and grow
beautiful again.
Take them, Love, withered as they are.

L'ENVOI

I've danced to your tunes long enough.
I've sung my heart to sleep a thousand times with songs of
you.
I've waited upon you and been jealous.
I've hungered that you might dress well.
I've laughed with a soul full of tears to hear you laugh.
I have worked while you slept.
And all the time I did not know one thing, one simple thing:
That we were only children obeying the dirty laws of nature.

A WOMAN'S DRESS

Did you ever notice the rhythm, the soft music, in the rustle
of a woman's dress

About her legs?

How it folds, caresses and enriches her beauty, that appeal
to passion.

FLORENCE, ITALY, 1500

I've loved him ever since . . . God help my soul!
The Padre wondered when I spoke of him
So jealously and made me say my beads
Each day that week. He might have been more fair
With three Our Fathers and three Hail Mary's given
Leniently . . . but, goodness, one must think
Too much of saving one's poor soul these days;
My lord, the Duke, possessed it two years gone
Regarding it as some stray gift cast down
To him; a treasure I looked careless on
As well as he did, or I'd not have sold
It half so cheaply . . . Mother Mary, it hurts
At times to be considered worse than dead
By those who loved me, and to have to slink
Through evening shadows next these ancient walls
For loving passionately. They turn their faces.
Even the children snicker, or seem afraid
Of me. A woman just the other day
Drew up her skirts in dread, edging away
And leaving me the whole right of the walk.
I took it, too. I strutted by her quick,
Head up, eyes flashing and my heart a hot
Coal in my breast. The Duke? Oh, they just smile
And smile when he drives past amid his friends,
And whirl on in a rising cloud of dust,
My lord, the Duke's gruff, hearty laugh above
Them all. To think, but two years gone I held
His very head against my heart and kissed
His eyes, his lips. He loved to come nightly
After twelve, or one, and pass the time
With me. He was the Duke, could I refuse?
Then, Mother Mary, I loved him so, more than

FLORENCE, ITALY, 1500

My life. God help me, I was overcome
With passion, swept along and trampled down
Without the friendly strength of sympathy,
Family, friends . . . foes, only foes
To mock me and to turn aside, or call
Behind me in the streets. But then, my Lord,
The Duke caught sight of me and sent his man
To call me to his chamber late that night.
I gasped. Picked from a hundred others, too!
Of course I knew that I was beautiful,
Am so still, but he grew tired soon.
A year, I think, or two. My memory's not
So good as once it was. He paid me well.
I took it wisely and as soon spent all
With foolish vanity. I didn't know.
So now I stand aside and see him pass
Among his friends. Once he saw me, smiled
Darkly, turned his head and then was gone.
It's over now. I guess I'm fixed all right,
Yet now and then I wish my lord, the Duke,
Were with me, whispering and laughingly
Disarming my embarrassment with kisses.
These haughty women may pass sneeringly
But I have seen them tremble at his frown
And fawn upon his hand and strain their necks
To catch a fleeting smile. I've loved the Duke
And he loved me.

The Padre will be cross.
I don't know which is the better; to be loved
By this shrewd Padre or the Duke. The Church,
The State. Oh, well, it's not so bad to fall
Out of the Duke's proud arms into this priest's.
The Padre has more passion, the Duke more gold.
I love them both. But now I must hurry home.

DEAD HANDS

I

Day after day in the long office lined with the eternal desks.
Patiently you formed the boyish clay into a semblance of
manhood.

Yourself past forty, clinging like a vine to life,
With the strength of a dream.

You were taken sick . . . I kissed you. . . .

Your torn hands were like white flowers lying on the bed
covers.

The office machinery whirled on.

And now I have these things to remember clearly:

A night when you let me hold you in my arms a moment,
saying:

"You do love me, boy, you do."

And second, a copy of Palgrave's Golden Treasury

Marked in your handwriting:

"To H. H. from . . . Christmas, 19—, In remembrance May-
July, 19—."

II

The walls were lined with the dark files

Against which the patient clerks hung like bats half asleep,
Their hands turning and filing the cards. . . .

Into this I was thrown after being expelled from school

And it might have claimed me by its insidious calm

Had you not understood and listened to the reading of my
stuff

Knowing that the boy had some hope of a real life

If you were kind. . . .

III

Back of us all is some lighted face that never fades,

DEAD HANDS

Around the wide circle of life we come back to it,
Again and again,
Wondering at the ignorance of youth
When it first plucks the flowers of love
With clumsy hands.

SONG

A sigh is the semblance of Christ's rich voice,
It contains the breath of sorrow. . . .
Wine is the semblance of Christ's red blood,
It is the wine of the earth. . . .
Hearts are the semblance of Christ's own heart,
They beat and are ruled by death. . . .
And we are the semblance of Christ himself,
For we are the essence and fruitage of earth.

LINES AT RANDOM

I

Perhaps more than all else, has your quickening sympathy
Awakened in me
The full, swinging sense of that responsibility
So needed by the dreamer.

II

Across the miles,
Beside me,
Ever and always the touch of your sensitive fingers. . . .

III

Out of a night of impenetrable darkness
A lonely dreamer
Wandering on a great desert
May find one star in the heavens
And weave his romance around it.

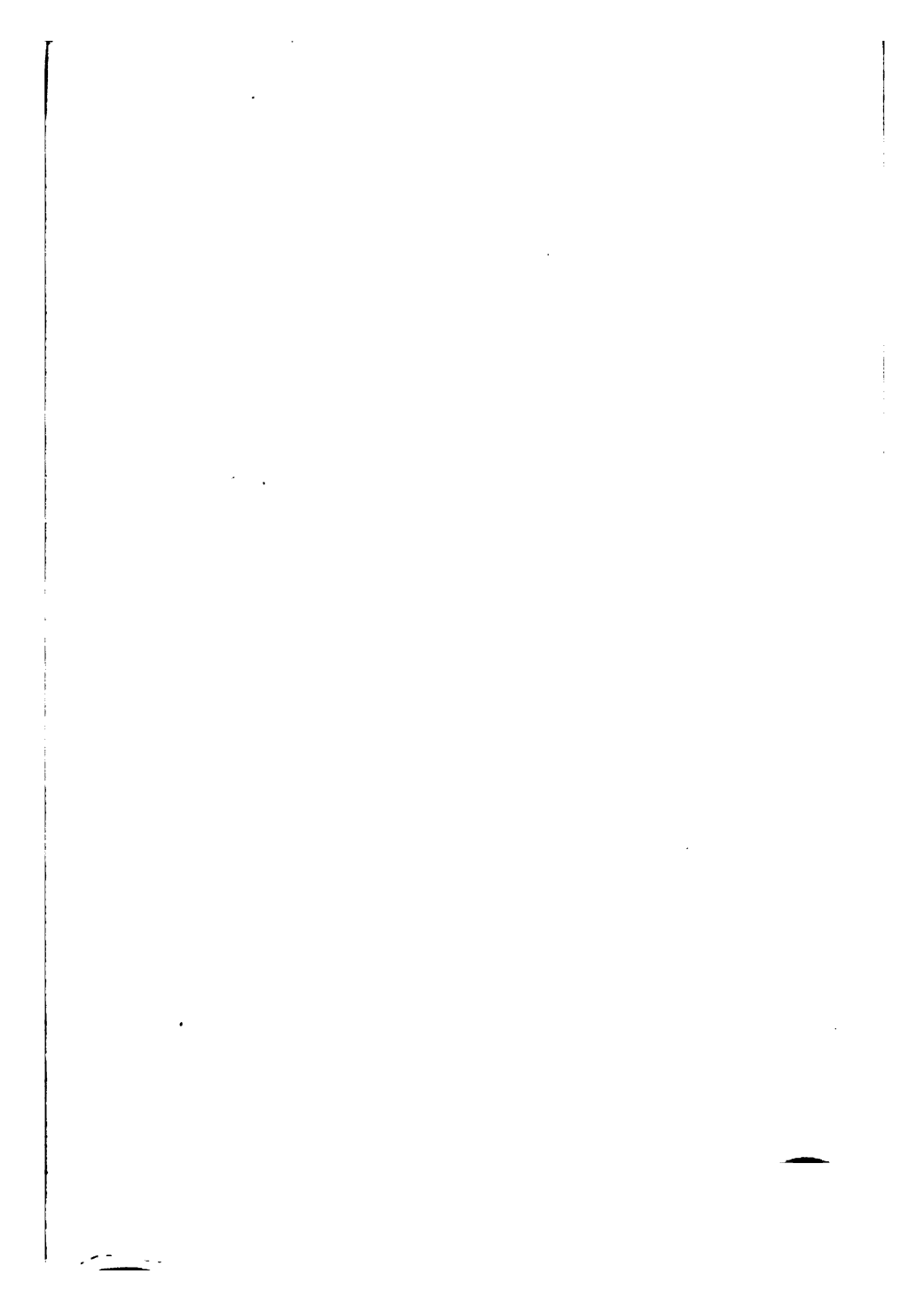
IV

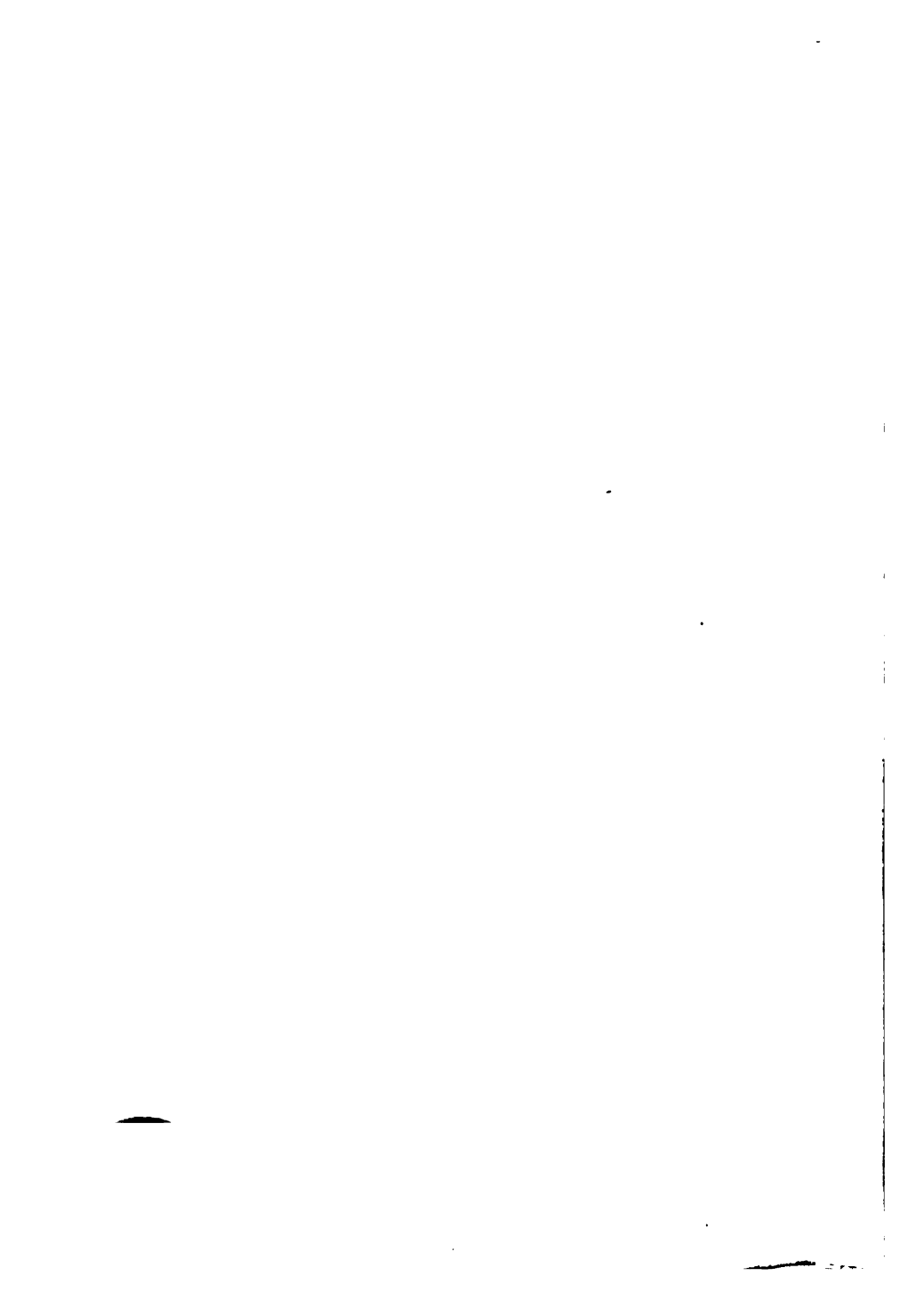
But a moment to meet,
One frail moment that might have spluttered
And gone out in the mad winds of circumstance. . . .

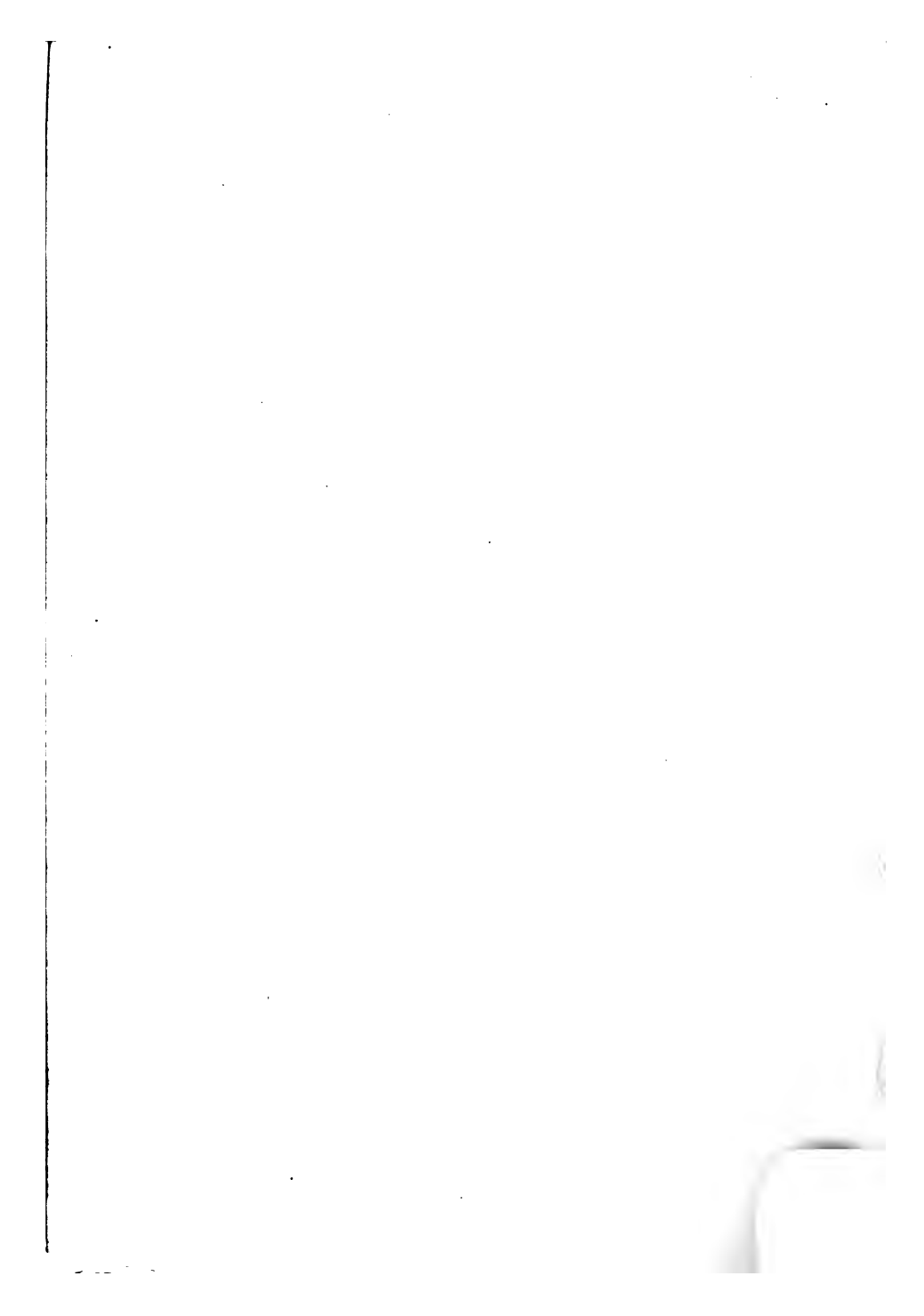
V

To know that in the world,
Even at the outermost ends of the world,
One spirit understands,
And lifts supplicating hands
To the unseen gods for our sakes.

Ah! that were good.

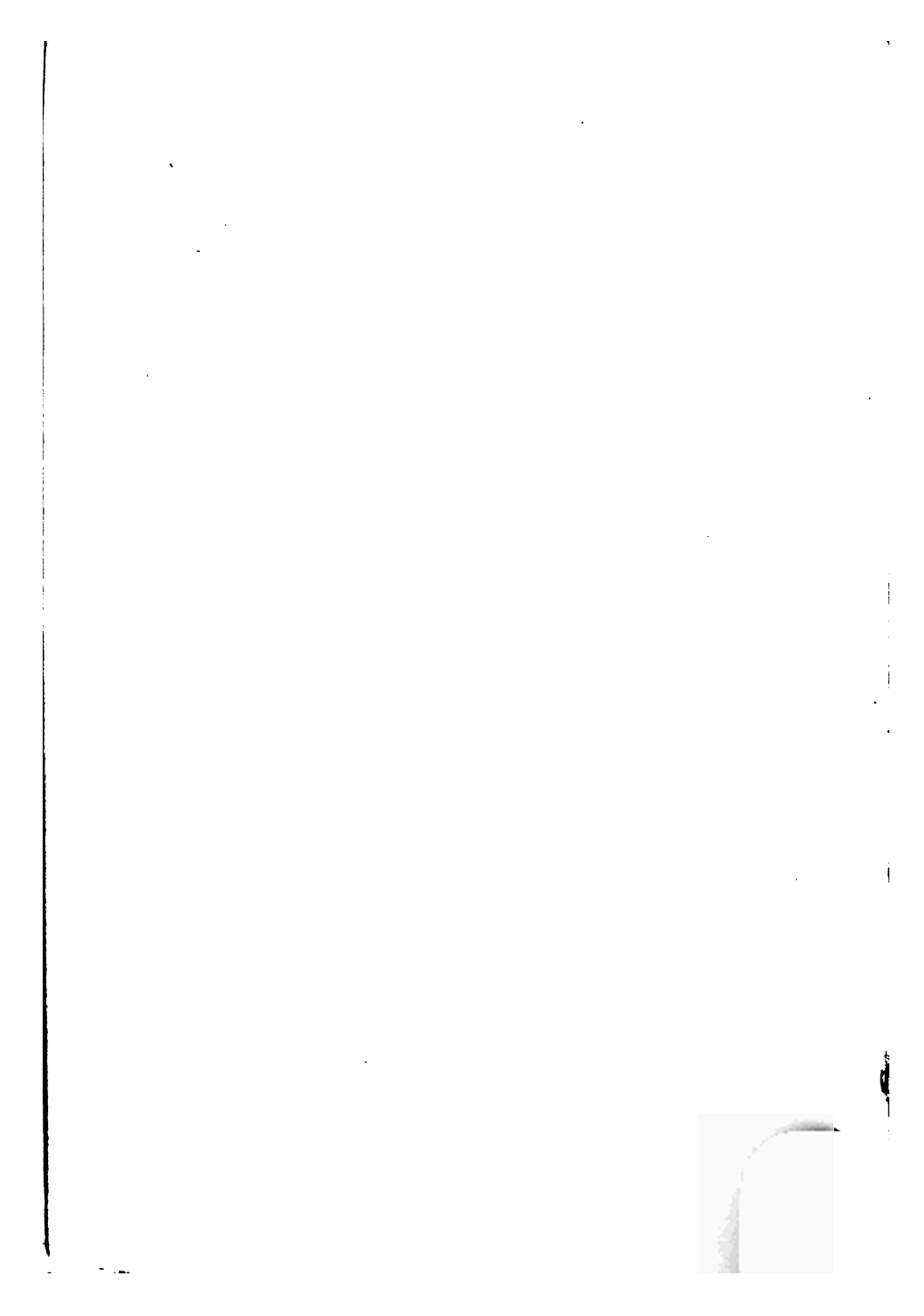


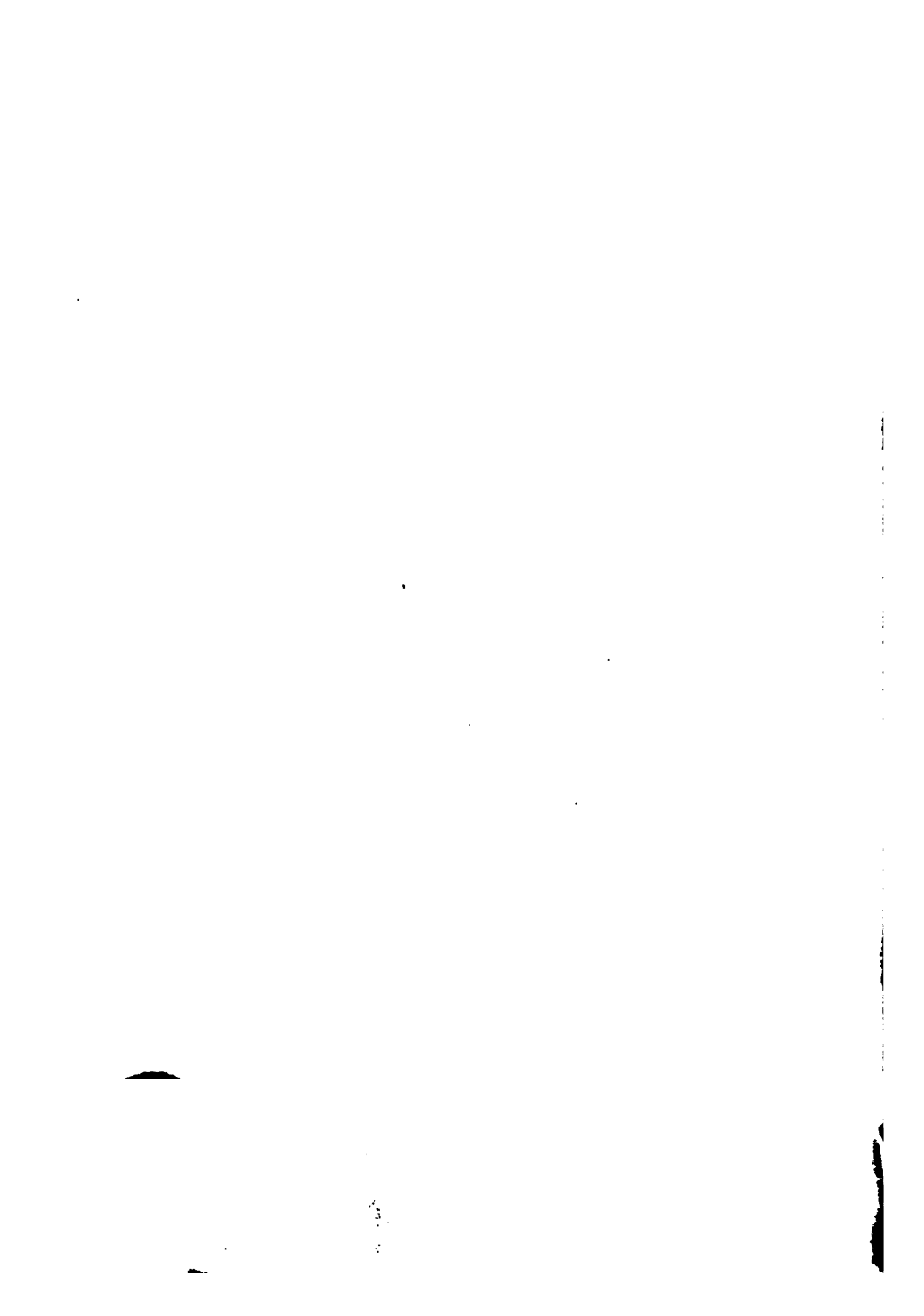


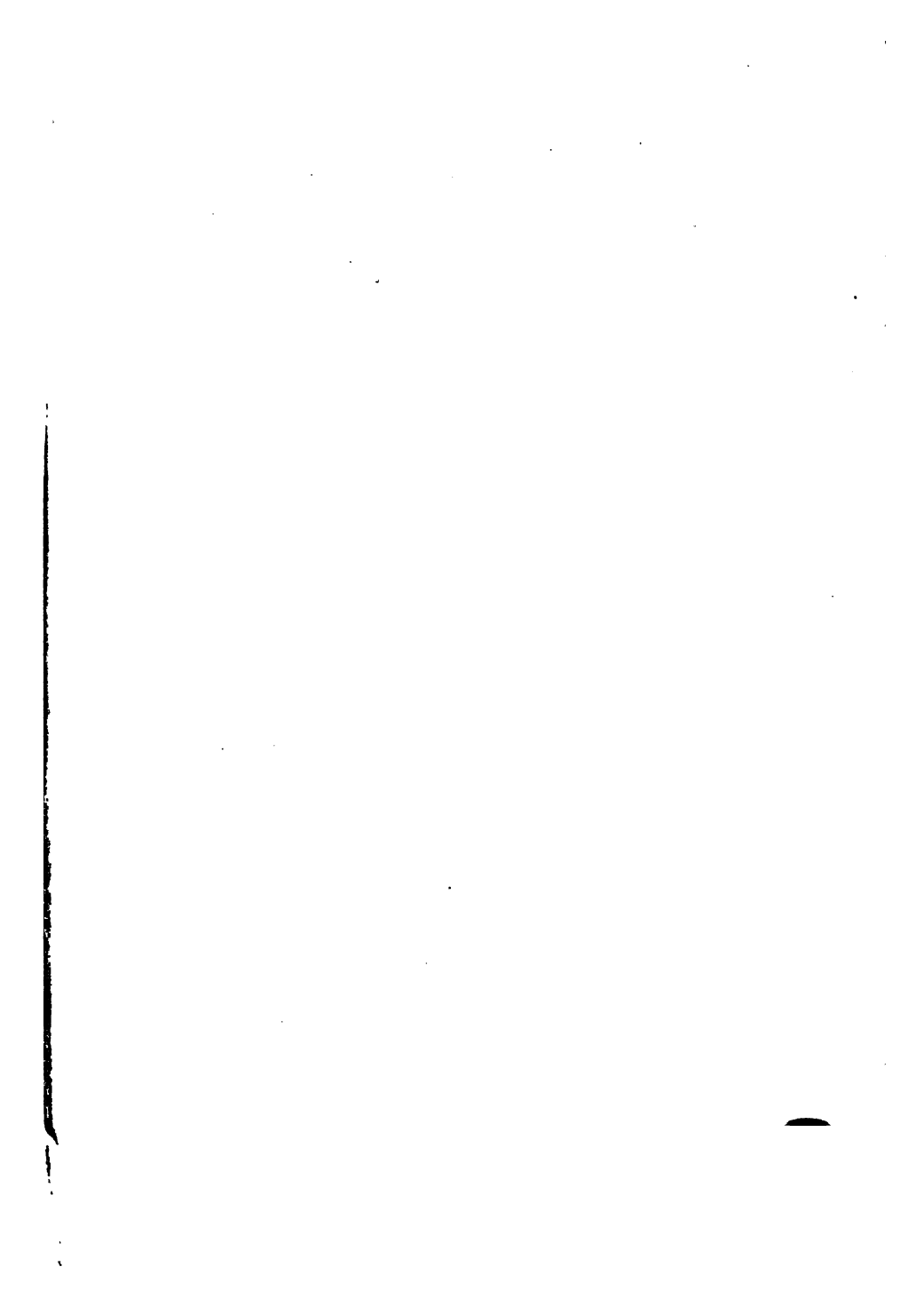


—

—



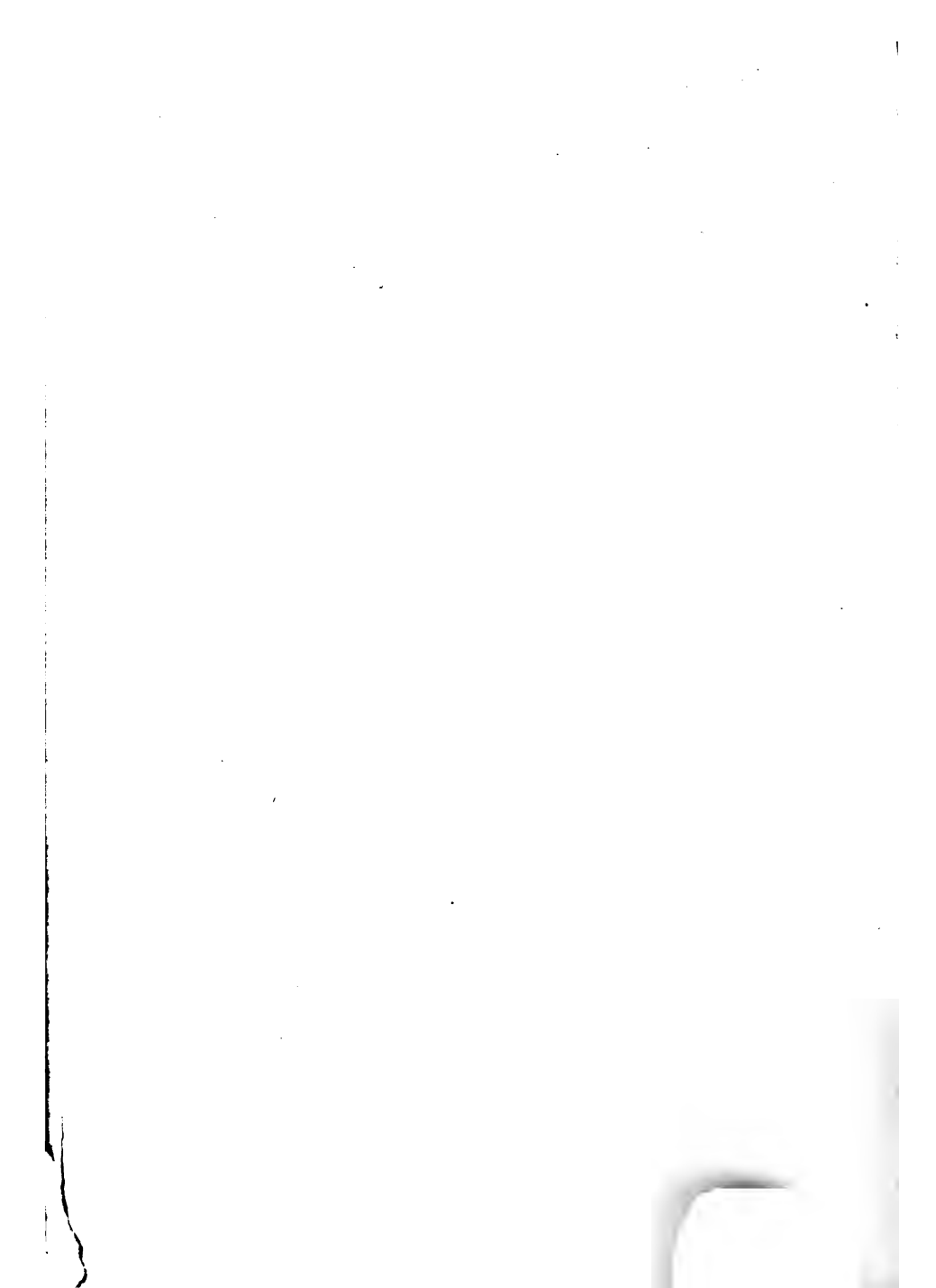




**THE NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY
REFERENCE DEPARTMENT**

**This book is under no circumstances to be
taken from the Building**

1.33 1420		
2.838		
0224 9		
1162 7		
9		
~~FEB 10 1920~~		
~~FEB 11 1920~~		
~~FEB 12 1920~~		
0261 21 1134		
FEB 12 1920		
FEB 12 1920		
FEB 13 1920		
		FEB 2 1920



**THE NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY
REFERENCE DEPARTMENT**

**This book is under no circumstances to be
taken from the Building**

FEB 3 1920		
~~FEB 4 1920~~		
~~FEB 5 1920~~		
~~FEB 6 1920~~		
FEB 7 1920		
9		
~~FEB 10 1920~~		
~~FEB 11 1920~~		
~~FEB 12 1920~~		
0261 21 1920		
FEB 12 1920		
FEB 12 1920		
FEB 13 1920		
FORM 430		FEB 2 1920

